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STORY OF RUSH

SPECIAL EDITION

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RUSH

THE ULTIMATE COMPANION GUIDE TO THE LIVES AND WORK OF RUSH





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FOREWORD

'The rock band at Madison Square Garden on Monday night was a trio that got together in the 1970s and has been selling out arena dates on a world tour this year. It has a bass-playing, reedy-voiced lead singer, a briskly virtuosic drummer and a guitarist who spills a variety of echoed chords over their riffs. Its songs contemplate the state of the world.'

No, it wasn't The Police, the Stones or The Who – it was Rush, the stalwart Canadian band that didn't have to reunite. Without a string of pop hits or much that's even remotely glamorous, Rush has maintained one of rock's biggest cult followings.

Rush has improbable ingredients for popularity. The music is grounded in progressive rock, with odd-meter riffs from Geddy Lee on bass and Neil Peart on drums below the guitarist Alex Lifeson's power chords and peeling arpeggios. Once scorned, progressive rock has started a comeback and Rush are at the forefront of that movement.'

That review was taken from the *New York Times* in 2007, and perhaps sums up the longevity and significance of Rush. Despite forming over forty years ago in 1968, the Canadian rock music trio were still selling out huge venues and having chart hits as recently as 2018. In this book we are going to discover who they were, and follow their progress from an elementary school band of mates to a global phenomenon.

Rush are considered to be one of the key members of the 1970s prog rock movement in music. This developed from the almost psychedelic rock from the 1960s and incorporated heavier guitar riffs and drum beats. The movement sold massively worldwide and we will look at the impact of Rush on the genre of progressive rock later.

Rush had several significant global hits, but found their greatest popularity in America where they dominated the Billboard 200 charts throughout the seventies and in the decades since. Arguably their biggest success was the 1982 hit *New World Man* which reached No. 1 in the American rock charts, as well as the Top 20 in the Billboard charts and the UK Top 40. Other notable No. 1 hits were *Dreamline*, *Show Don't Tell*, *Stick it Out* and *Test for Echo*. In the UK they are probably best known for the hits *The Spirit of Radio*, which reached No. 13 in 1980, and *Tom Sawyer*, a release that reached No. 25 in 1981 and again in 1982.

The band have sold millions of records worldwide and as a group, Rush possess twenty-four gold records and fourteen platinum records, placing them fourth behind the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Kiss for the most gold and platinum albums by a band in music history. Rush's sales statistics also place them third behind the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones for the most consecutive gold or platinum albums by a rock band. Rush also ranks seventy-ninth in US album sales with 25 million units, although total worldwide album sales are not calculated by any single entity, as of 2004 several industry sources estimated Rush's total worldwide album sales at over

forty-million units, a figure that is sure to grow exponentially as new generations discover the music of Rush.

Rush have also become known for their outstanding and at times eccentric live stage performances and tours that are used to promote their albums. Rush have always been able to sell out huge venues like Madison Square Garden in Times Square and despite disbanding in 2018 they still get extensive airplay on radio stations in the United States. The trio became well known for their ability to constantly change instruments, never appearing on stage with the same guitar as the previous gig during the 1970s. To this day members are still well-known for endorsing numerous musical brands and even creating their own range of guitars.

It is perhaps this versatility that led to Rush receiving their own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles in recognition of their long serving contribution to music. They have been named in the Classic Rock Hall of Fame, a well-deserved accolade after five decades in the music industry.

Even the band themselves are surprised at how well they lasted in the business. When Alex Lifeson summed up the modern music industry perfectly when *Guitar Player* magazine asked him, 'Think back thirty years did you ever think you'd be talking to us now?'

'I was surprised to even be around that long. I remember saying in 1974, when we started our first American tour, that if we could get five years out of this thing it would be quite remarkable. That was about the extent of a band's longevity at the time. Now we're twenty-five years beyond that. A lot of great bands have come and gone in that time. Are there any bands out now that can last thirty years? I don't know if they'll get a chance. Based on talent, there are bands that probably could, but the way record companies work is completely different than it was thirty years ago. Record companies have become speculators, rather than developers. Nowadays, you have to come in with a completed record, and it's released on spec. If it

instantly does okay, you might get a deal. If it doesn't, you'll get dropped. When we got our deal in 1974, it was for five records. We were a young, unknown band. The record company looked at it like, "Let them work their stuff out for the first couple of records, and, hopefully, when the third record hits and is successful, then we've got two more records to capitalise on that success." Opportunities like ours just don't seem to be around anymore.'

SO, WHO ARE THE OTHER TWO PLAYERS IN RUSH?

GEDDY LEE

Born in Ontario in 1953, Geddy Lee is best known as the bands lead vocalist, bassist and keyboard player. Lee joined the group towards the end of 1968 as a replacement for the bands previous short-term lead singer Jeff Jones. Lee was a childhood friend of fellow band member Alex Lifeson and the two even went to school together and stayed at each other's houses as youngsters.

Geddy Lee was born Gary Lee Weinrib but his stage name, Geddy, was inspired by his mother's heavily-accented pronunciation of his given first name, Gary. This later became his high school nickname before he adopted it as his stage name. Lee's parents were Jewish refugees from Poland that survived the Nazi concentration camps Dachau and Bergen-Belsen during the Second World War. In 2004, Canadian Jewish News featured Lee's reflections on his mother's experiences as a refugee, and of his own Jewish heritage. Lee married Nancy Young in 1976 and they have two children, a son called Julian and a daughter called Kyla.

In addition to his composing, arranging, and performing duties for Rush, Lee has produced for various other bands, including Rocket Science. Lee's first solo effort, *My Favourite Headache*, was released in 2000. Along with his Rush band mates, guitarist Alex

Lifeson and drummer Neil Peart, Lee was made an Officer of the Order of Canada on 9 May 1996. The trio was the first rock band to be honoured so as a group. Lee is ranked thirteenth by *Hit Parade* magazine on their list of The 100 Greatest Heavy Metal Vocalists of All Time.

Geddy Lee is arguably best known for his use of gadgetry and equipment and has become synonymous with weird and wonderful musical instruments. He has pioneered new keyboards and bass guitars, and inspired some of the finest musicians of modern times. He is renowned for constantly touring with a different bass guitar as this article from the bands official website explains:

‘For his first local gigs in the early 1970s and Rush’s debut album, Lee used a Fender Precision Bass. From *Fly by Night* onward, Lee favoured Rickenbacker basses, particularly the 4001 model, and a Fender Jazz Bass which is heard on *Permanent Waves*, *Moving Pictures*, *Signals* and the supporting tours. In 1981, Lee began using the compact, headless Steinberger bass, which he occasionally used on the supporting tour for *Signals* and for several tracks on *Grace Under Pressure*. From 1985 to 1992, Lee used British Wal basses. He switched back to Fender Jazz Basses for the recording of *Counterparts* in 1993, and has been using them virtually exclusively since, heard on albums *Test for Echo*, *Vapor Trails*, *Feedback* and *Snakes & Arrows*. However, he used a Fender Jaco Pastorius Tribute fretless replica bass for the song *Malignant Narcissism* on *Snakes & Arrows*, and a Fender Custom Shop Jazz with an Alder Body and a Flamed Maple top in transparent red for songs in an alternate tuning during the last several tours. In 1998, Fender released the Geddy Lee Jazz Bass, available in black and three-colour sunburst. This signature model is a recreation of Lee’s favourite bass, a 1972 Fender Jazz that he bought in a pawn shop in Kalamazoo, Michigan. On all of his basses, Lee uses Rotosound Swing Bass 66 Stainless Steel round-wound strings

'If there was any one achievement, it would be that we've have done it on our own terms.'

— ALEX LIFESON



(RS66LA). Lee once again used his Rickenbacker 4001 for the performance of *A Passage to Bangkok* on the 2007 and 2008 Snakes & Arrows Tour. For the 2010 Time Machine Tour, Lee added the alchemical symbol for amalgamation to the body of his Fender Jazz Bass guitar.'

However since 1996, as well as varying his bass guitars regularly he has also begun to shun traditional amplifiers and keyboards preferring instead to use a venue's own sound system and plug his guitar into the microphone system. This has led to him having a huge space on his side of the stage where amplifiers and equipment would traditionally be positioned. Lee has filled this gap with a wide range of items from a full size commercial fridge freezer to coin operated tumble dryers.

Geddy Lee is also a huge advocate of charity work and a fan of baseball. In June 2008, he donated a collection of 200 rare signed baseballs that he had cherished since his childhood to a museum in Kansas City. They were from the Negro Leagues, which were set up in the 1930s and bore a huge significance to the Negro Leagues Museum that had been recently set up to commemorate racial separation in the United States.

Lee's high-register vocal style has always been a signature of the band, and was sometimes a focal point for criticism, especially during the early years of Rush's career when Lee's vocals were high-pitched, with a strong likeness to other singers like Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin. Although his voice has softened over the years, it is often described as a 'wail'. Lee's instrumental abilities, on the other hand, are rarely criticised. An award-winning musician, Lee's style, technique and ability on the bass guitar have proven influential in the rock and heavy metal genres, inspiring such players as Steve Harris of Iron Maiden and Cliff Burton of Metallica, among others.

The bulk of Lee's work in music has been with Rush. However, Lee has also contributed to a body of work outside of his involvement with the band through guest appearances and album production.

In 1981, Lee was the featured guest for the hit song *Take Off*, and its included comedic commentary. This starred Bob and Doug McKenzie, played by Rick Moranis, who Lee actually went to school with, and Dave Thomas, for the McKenzie Brothers' comedy album *Great White North*. The following year, Lee produced the debut album from Toronto New wave band Boys Brigade. On the 1985 album *We Are the World*, by humanitarian consortium USA for Africa, Lee recorded guest vocals for the song *Tears Are Not Enough*.

Apart from band contributions, Lee sang the Canadian National Anthem in front of a full crowd at Camden Yards for the 1993 All-Star Game. Another version of *O Canada* in rock format was recorded by Lee and Lifeson on the accompanying soundtrack CD for the Trey Parker and Matt Stone film *South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut* released in 1999.

My Favourite Headache, Lee's first solo album, was released in November 2000 while Rush was on a hiatus due to tragedies in drummer Neil Peart's life. Lee appeared in Broken Social Scene's music video for their 2006 single *Fire Eye'd Boy*, judging the band while they perform various musical tasks. In 2006, Lee joined Lifeson's super group the Big Dirty Band, to provide songs accompanying *Trailer Park Boys: The Movie*.

Lee's life has seen him win a number of famous awards including Best Rock Guitarist and Best Bass Guitarist from *Guitar Player* magazine. He was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1994 and is still seen as an ambassador for Canadian music worldwide.

ALEX LIFESON

Alex Lifeson is best known as the groups' guitarist and one of their founder members. In the summer of 1968, Lifeson founded the band that became Rush with friend and original drummer John Rutsey. He has been an integral member of the three-piece band ever since. Lifeson was born Aleksandar Živojinović in Fernie, British Columbia

to Serbian immigrants, Nenad and Milka. He was raised in Toronto, Ontario where he met his fellow band members at secondary school. His assumed stage name of Lifeson is a semi-literal translation of the name Zivojinovic, which means 'son of life' in Serbian.

Lifeson's first girlfriend, Charlene, gave birth to their eldest son, Justin, in October 1970, and they married in 1975. Their second son, Adrian, who is also involved in music, performed on two tracks from Lifeson's 1996 solo project, *Victor*.

Lifeson's first exposure to formal music training came in the form of the viola, which he renounced for the guitar at the age of twelve. His first guitar was a Christmas gift from his father, a six-string Kent classical acoustic which was later upgraded to an electric Japanese model. During his adolescent years, Lifeson was influenced primarily by Jimi Hendrix, Pete Townshend, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. In 1963 Lifeson met the future Rush drummer John Rutsey in school. Both were interested in music and decided to form a band. Lifeson was primarily a self-taught guitarist with his only formal instruction coming from a high school friend in 1971 who taught classical guitar lessons. This training lasted for roughly a year and a half.

Instrumentally, Lifeson is regarded as a guitarist whose strengths and notability rely primarily on signature riffing, electronic effects and processing, unorthodox chord structures, and a copious arsenal of equipment used over the years. Despite his esteem, however, Lifeson is often regarded as being overshadowed by his band mates due to their on stage eccentricity, in comparison to his calmer and more composed style.

Unlike many of the other members of Rush, past and present, Lifeson has also developed a fairly active media career and is well respected as a solo artist, television presenter and actor. This began in 1972 when he appeared in a Canadian documentary film called *Come on Children*. He then left acting to focus on his music career before returning to the craft during a Rush hiatus in the late 1990s.

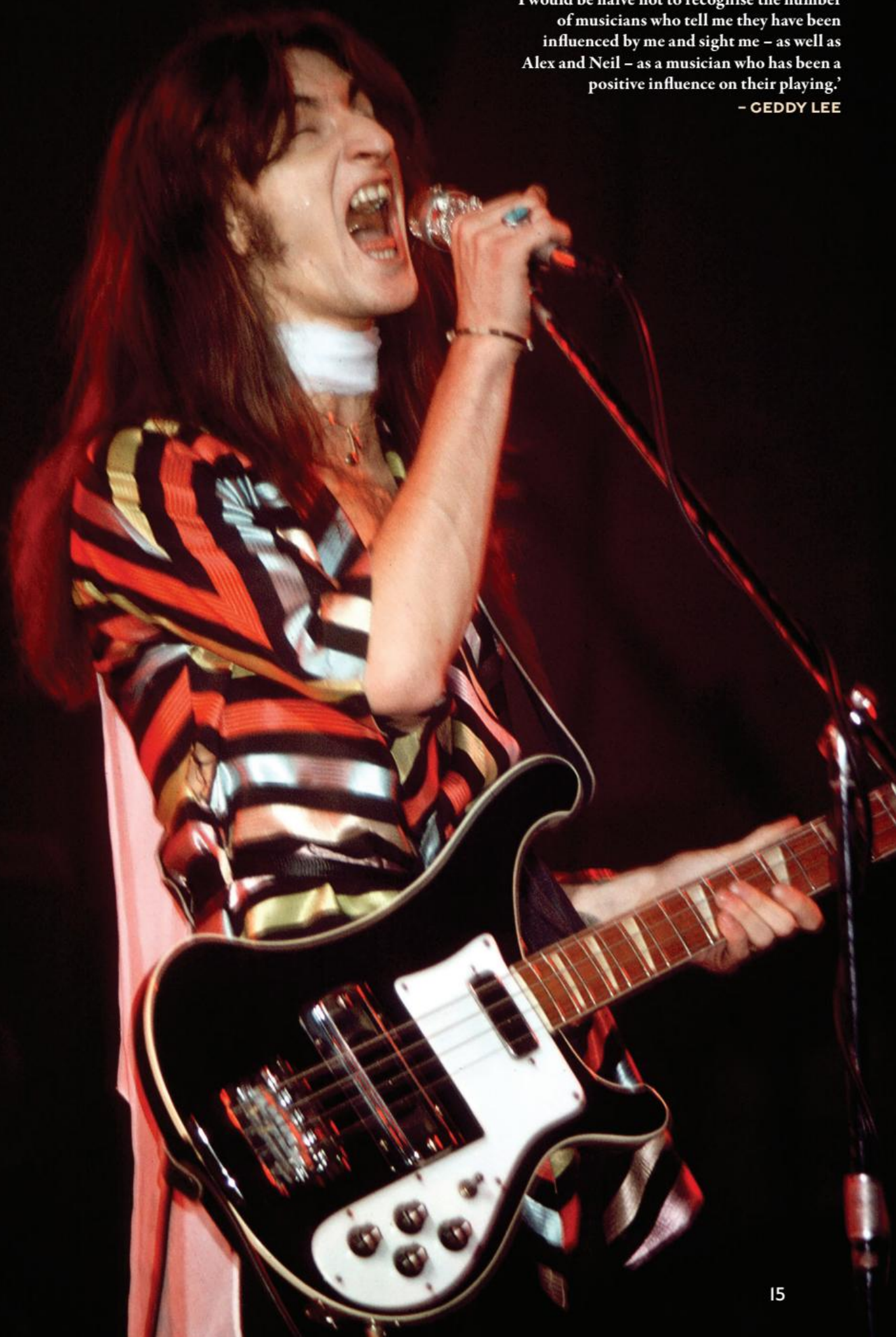
Lifeson's next foray into television came in 2003, when he starred in an episode of the Canadian mockumentary *Trailer Park Boys*, titled *Closer to the Heart*, in which Lifeson plays a partly-fictional version of himself. In the story, he is kidnapped by the show's protagonist Ricky and held as punishment for his inability to provide the main characters with free tickets to a Rush concert. In the end of the episode, Alex reconciles with the characters, and performs a duet of *Closer to the Heart* with the character Bubbles at the trailer park.

Lifeson later went on to be instrumental in the Rush's 2008 appearance on hit Television comedy show *The Colbert Report*, which provides a satirical take on week's news. The band played the full version of *Tom Sawyer*, which according to the host was the first time the entire band had appeared on television in thirty-three years. Lifeson also appeared in *Trailer Park Boys: The Movie*, as a traffic cop in the opening scene and then again in *Trailer Park Boys: Countdown to Liquor Day*, but this time featured in drag as an undercover vice cop. In 2009, Lifeson and his fellow Rush members appeared as themselves in the hit comedy *I Love You, Man*. In 2010, Lifeson once again appeared in a Trailer Park Boys project, *The Drunk and On Drugs Happy Fun Time Hour*.

However, much like the life of most rock musicians, Alex Lifeson's career and musical life hasn't been without controversy. In what fans and critics alike refer to as the Naples Incident, Alex managed to get himself arrested at the Ritz Hotel in Naples, Florida. He was in the hotel on New Year's Eve with his son and daughter-in-law and was accused of assaulting a sheriff who was trying to break up a fight between his son and another youth. On 21 April 2005, Lifeson and his son agreed to a plea deal with the local prosecutor for the State's Attorney office to avoid jail-time by pleading no contest to a first-degree misdemeanour charge of 'resisting arrest without violence'. This is the most serious of the misdemeanour charges in the US, and as part of the plea agreement Lifeson and his son were each sentenced to twelve months of probation.

'I would be naive not to recognise the number of musicians who tell me they have been influenced by me and sight me – as well as Alex and Neil – as a musician who has been a positive influence on their playing.'

– GEDDY LEE



Lifeson is known for his wide range of guitars and other musical instruments that he constantly varies, much like Lee. For most of Rush's early career and throughout the seventies, Lifeson took an understated approach and stuck to a Gibson ES-535. However during the eighties and nineties Lifeson began to become more experimental with his instruments. By 1982 Lifeson's primary guitar was a modified Fender Stratocaster with a Bill Lawrence high-output L-500 in the bridge position and a Floyd Rose vibrato bridge. Lifeson increasingly relied on a selection of four identically modified Stratocasters from 1980–1986, all of them equipped with the Floyd Rose bridge.

Lifeson is also regularly involved in charity and has launched his own range of guitars in association with the music company Hughes and Kettner with the proceeds from sales going to the children's charity Unicef. He has also been named the Best Rock Guitarist by *Guitar Player* magazine on 4 occasions in addition to receiving the Order of Canada in 1996.

NEIL PEART

Neil Peart was born in September 1952 in Port Dalhousie in Ontario, Canada. He had a passion for music from a young age, getting into trouble at school and at home for his constant drumming on tables and desks. From the age of thirteen he participated in various regional bands, but decided his future lay in England and moved there at the age of eighteen. Unfortunately, he found little success in London, where he ended up selling jewellery, and returned to Canada after eighteen months.

Peart was disillusioned by his lack of progress in the music business on his return to Canada, but never gave up. He supported himself working for his father selling tractor parts whilst he pursued a career in a local band called Hush. They toured the Southern Ontario bar circuit and small local venues. In 1974, the turning point in Peart's career came when he was asked to audition for the Toronto

band Rush as a replacement for their then-drummer, John Rutsey. Peart made quite an impression on his fellow bandmates, making a haphazard entrance, fresh from his father's farm. As Geddy Lee told *The Guardian* in 2018, 'He was very tall, lanky. And he had short hair. All of us had major hair... he had just moved back home and given up his dream of playing in a rock band... He drove up in this little sports car, drums were hanging out from every corner. He comes in, this big goofy guy with a small drum kit with eighteen-inch bass drums. Alex [Lifeson] and I were chuckling – we thought he was a hick from the country. And then he sat down behind this kit and pummelled the drums, and us. I'd never heard a drummer like that, someone with that power and dexterity. As far as I was concerned, he was hired from the minute he started playing.'

The mirth of his future bandmates was not lost on Peart, who said in a later interview with *Rolling Stone* that, 'I felt that my entire audition was a complete disaster, I was shocked when they chose me.'

It is certainly not shocking to anyone who has since heard Peart's astonishing technical brilliance, but Rush got even more than they bargained for when Peart came onboard. He was also a stunning lyricist, although he had not developed the skill much up to this point. The lack of an interest in writing within the band forced his hand, and soon he was the band's primary lyricist. Frontman Geddy Lee never actually wrote a lyric during Peart's time with the band. Of this Lee has reflected, 'It has felt odd at times. It has felt very comfortable at times, at times very uncomfortable. Being an interpreter for Neil has been a singular pleasure of mine and a really difficult job at the same time, because I'm not always on the same page as him. As we grew as a band, I became trusted by him to be his sounding board and his editor, and if I couldn't get into a thing, he would leave it alone. That's the beauty of a relationship that lasts.'

Peart enjoyed huge cult success with Rush throughout the late seventies and early eighties. The band reached the peak of their



'I think Rush have always had this reputation, particularly to non-fans, of being an ultra-serious and cerebral group when, in fact, the reverse is true. We don't take ourselves seriously at all. Sure, we take our music seriously, but that's altogether different.'

- ALEX LIFESON



popularity with the 1981 release of *Moving Pictures*. Following this, the band started to wind down for a time and Peart began exploring new directions musically. During this time Peart looked into new ways to expand his drumming skills. This is incredible considering he was thought of as one of the greatest drummers in the industry, but Peart took up lessons with the jazz player Freddie Gruber. In the 1990s Peart went on to create two albums celebrating Buddy Rich – a jazz icon and personal hero of his.

In 1997 tragedy struck for Peart when his then-only daughter Selena was killed in a car accident. Devastated by the news, Peart's first wife Jacqueline succumbed to cancer and died only ten months later. Emotionally destroyed, Peart found he was unable to return to music and Rush were put on hiatus.

As Geddy Lee described it, 'Neil was so powerfully running away from all that pain that it was understandable to me if he didn't want to return to the things that reminded him of the life that had been stolen from him. I didn't think he would return.'

But return he did, although it was four years before Peart felt ready to retake the stage. Peart's road to recovery began when he met his future wife, photographer Carrie Nuttall. They instantly connected and were married on 9 September 2000.

Peart's public return to the scene came in 2002 with the release of Rush's album *Vapor Trails*. This was followed by an accompanying tour, and Neil stayed involved in music full time until his 2015 retirement. He withdrew from Rush citing tendinitis and shoulder issues: 'It does not pain me to realise that, like all athletes, there comes a time to... take yourself out of the game. I would rather set it aside than face the predicament described in our song *Losing It*.'

Following his retirement, Rush searched for another drummer but eventually decided that a natural conclusion to the band's career had been reached. It is a testament to the high esteem that fellow drummers hold Peart in, that when Dave Grohl of Nirvana and Foo Fighters fame, was offered the position, he responded, 'I'm not

physically or musically capable, but thanks for the offer. That's a whole other animal, another species of drummer.'

It is also notable that throughout his life Peart was also a prolific author, writing several non-fiction books centring around his travels on the road and experiences with grief and recovery. These have been widely acclaimed by critics, and Neil also collaborated on a number of fiction projects.

It seems that writing was always in his blood and rhythm in his soul. Although the circumstances surrounding his death are tragic, they may yet serve to highlight a devastating disease, and it is his musical legacy that Neil Peart will be remembered for – and for that we all thank him.

The devastating news of Peart's passing was summed up by the surviving members of Rush who issued the following statement:

'It is with broken hearts and the deepest sadness that we must share the terrible news that on Tuesday our friend, soul brother and band mate of over forty-five years, Neil, has lost his incredible brave three-and-a-half year battle with brain cancer... Rest in peace brother.'

OTHER NOTABLE BAND MEMBERS

JOHN RUTSEY was one of the founders of Rush and was a member from August 1968 to the summer of 1974. During that time Rutsey was the bands drummer and percussionist, and also sang backing vocals on a number of early hits. It was during this time that he played on the single *Not Fade Away / You Can't Fight It* and on the band's eponymous debut LP. According to the Rush biography *Contents Under Pressure: 30 Years of Rush at Home & Away* by Martin Popoff, Lee and Lifeson both acknowledged that during the writing and recording sessions for the band's debut album Rutsey was given the role of chief lyricist. Unfortunately when the time came to record these songs Rutsey did not deliver any lyrics. In interviews, Lee and Lifeson have both said that Rutsey was dissatisfied with what he had

written and tore up the lyric sheets. Rutsey was said to have left the band following a diagnosis with diabetes, which would have posed potential problems with extended tours. His final performance with the group was on 25 July 1974 at Centennial Hall in London, Ontario. He was eventually replaced in the band by Neil Peart. Rutsey died in May 2008, following complications with his heart relating to his diabetes. His former band mates Lee and Lifeson released a statement praising Rutsey's role in the band saying, 'Those years spent in our teens dreaming of one day doing what we continue to do decades later are special. Although our paths diverged many years ago, we smile today, thinking back on those exciting times and remembering John's wonderful sense of humour and impeccable timing.'

JEFF JONES was the original bass guitarist in Rush, but he only lasted for a short period in 1968. He went on to become a member of the band Ocean. During his time with Rush he served as the primary bassist and lead singer before he was replaced by Geddy Lee just a few months after the band formed. In Ocean, Jones was hugely successful and their million-selling 1971 single *Put Your Hand in the Hand* was awarded a received a gold disc by the Recording Industry Association of America on 3 May 1971. Ocean disbanded in 1975.

LINDY YOUNG was a short-term session and recording artist. Young played keyboards, rhythm guitar and sang backing vocals between December 1968 and July 1969.

MITCH BOSSI was a short-term album and tour artist that played rhythm guitar and sang backing vocals between February 1971 and May 1971.

JOE PERNA was a short-term bass guitar player, who also sang some lead vocals. Perna was only with the band for a couple of months during the summer of 1969.

'Playing live is such a total visceral
experience, and really, as a musician,
you're trained from the beginning to
be a live performer.'
- GEDDY LEE



RUSH AND THE PROG ROCK GENRE 1975–1981

Rush's musical style has changed substantially over the years. Their debut album was strongly influenced by British blues rock: an amalgam of sounds and styles from such rock bands as Cream, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple. Over the first few albums their style remained essentially hard rock, with heavy influences from The Who and Led Zeppelin but by a process of musical osmosis Rush also became increasingly influenced by bands of the British progressive rock movement.

In the tradition of progressive rock, Rush created extended compositions that strived to push the boundaries of melody and form. Varied time signatures combined with fantasy and science fiction-inspired lyrics were the hallmark of Rush during their progressive phase. However, the trio offered no compromises and did not soften their sound. This fusion of hard and progressive rock continued until the end of the 1970s. Progressive rock's popularity peaked in the mid-1970s, when British prog artists such as Pink Floyd, Yes, Genesis and ELP regularly topped reader polls in popular music magazines in both Britain and America. By this time, several North American progressive rock bands had been formed. However, there were only a few similarly British-influenced acts in North America, chief among them was, of course, Kansas. Kansas existed in one form or another from 1971, and they became one of the most commercially successful of all the progressive rock bands.

Beyond the addition of new instruments, Rush kept in stride with the progressive rock movement by continuing to compose long, conceptual songs with science fiction and fantasy overtones. However, as the new decade approached, Rush gradually began to dispose of their older styles of music in favour of shorter, and sometimes simpler, arrangements. To this point the lyrics, most of them written by Peart, were heavily influenced by classical poetry, fantasy literature and science fiction. These influences are exhibited

most prominently on Rush's 1975 release *Anthem* from *Fly by Night* and on a specifically acknowledged derivation in 1976's *2112*.

The advent of punk rock and disco music in the late 1970s helped shift critical opinion and popular support in the UK and the US towards a simpler and more aggressive style of rock. This led to progressive bands being increasingly dismissed as pretentious and overblown, ending progressive rock's reign as a leading style in rock. However, established progressive bands still had a strong fan base. Rush, Genesis, ELP, Yes, Queen and Pink Floyd all regularly scored Top 10 albums with massive accompanying tours. Fortunately staunch support meant that many of these acts, Rush in particular, actually became more popular as time went by. Overall, however, prog rock was losing its relevance, becoming largely associated with, in the words of Dr. Feelgood's Wilko Johnson 'men in dresses singing about Mars, science fiction, love and fantasy'.

Rush began to realise that in order to maintain their fan base they would have to adapt their style to incorporate the New wave sound of disco, pop music and synthesisers. This resulted in the band's move from the progressive rock style to a fusion of pop, rock and electro-synthesiser in the early eighties. Rush successfully merged their sound with the trends of this period, experimenting with New wave and pop rock. This period included the band's most extensive use of synthesisers, sequencers and electronic percussion. Although a hard progressive rock style was still evident, more and more synthesisers were introduced throughout the 1980s.

Another change was that, in an effort to increase the limited airplay Rush's previous extended-length songs received, their new album *Permanent Waves* included shorter, more radio-friendly songs. *The Spirit of Radio* and *Freewill* were two such tracks that helped *Permanent Waves* achieve huge success in the US and abroad.

With the dawn of the early nineties and Rush's character sound still intact, the band transformed their style once again to harmonise with the alternative rock movement. Rush started to return to their

'I think we're quite unique in that we do have our own sound and approach and we don't really care what's going on elsewhere...we've never wanted to be part of another trend or movement.'

- ALEX LIFESON



roots of music with the inclusion of blues rock and some progressive rock beats and rhythms on their new albums before their hiatus in 1997. The 1993 album *Counterparts* began to see the return of guitars over synthesisers. This theme continued onto the 1996 album *Test for Echo* and both albums have been called 'Rush's most guitar-led albums of their forty year career in music'.

The new millennium has saw Rush return to a more rock and roll roots sound, albeit with modern production. The band started to incorporate more electronics and better amplification in their music. But the lyrics and style returned to the early stages blues rock, as well as some progressive rock mixed with heavy metal. It seemed the band had gone full circle and tried to appeal to their original fan base. Perhaps this was a commercial decision, maybe it was simply for style and ease of creativity, but it definitely proved popular with the fans.

I suppose it is difficult to attach a single generic musical style to Rush. How can a group that has exhibited so many different styles and type of songs be referred to as just prog rock, heavy metal, blues rock or synthesised pop. It's difficult to assess where Rush made their greatest contribution and impact, however the majority of critics view them as one of the most influential progressive rock bands of all time, hence they are commonly associated with this genre. Some critics argue that Rush are progressive rock in one sense, but that they have some much more than this dimension. As the online critic known as 'Prog Rock is My Life' put it:

'First off they are progressive rock in the sense that they have the necessary albums to merit their inclusion (*Caress of Steel* through to *Moving Pictures*). I am more concerned about the later years (*Signals* to *Vapor Trails*). It has been said that these albums are not progressive albums but have progressive songs, but I disagree. The 1980's Rush output is just as prog rock as the seventies output.'

'For example, these albums may not have long songs with extended pieces in them but they do have a theme about them. It

is not a concept album, but rather an album that has one singular theme in all the songs. *Grace Under Pressure* is as the album title suggests is about despair and troubled times. *Signals* is about signals sent out in society, and the views of what is popular and makes you “cool”. *Chemistry* is about the signals sent in the body, and *Power Windows* is about how power can be, and is, corrupted.

‘At this point in time Rush decided to move on and progress away from the synthesiser period. Most people consider the synthesiser period as a pop side of Rush, but pop means what was popular at that time and does not have connotations that it is not progressive rock music; it is just progressive rock that happens to be popular much like Pink Floyd. If Rush were concerned about popularity they would have done what the public wanted from them at that time, more synthesiser music. But, being a progressive rock band, they decided to once again go in a different direction. It marks another section of Rush. The music changed but the theme based albums did not. *Roll the Bones* is about chances and *Counterparts* is about, well, counterparts to life. Rush may have returned to their roots, but this is not regressing. They decided to make music that was more guitar oriented that included mainstream style (a bit) yet his was not mostly mainstream style. They took what was popular at that time and made it their own. They even strayed away a bit with the instrumental tracks on *Roll the Bones* and *Counterparts*.

‘Clearly Rush were a progressive rock band by the way they changed musical style and by their album content. If they stayed in the same style this would not be progressive rock since they would not be moving their music in different directions. The fact that they have made many albums with theme based lyrics suggests that this is the work of a progressive rock band.’

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Rush have been widely recognised as one of the most successful bands of all time winning countless awards ranging from Grammys to Stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In this section we explore the nominations and triumphs that have littered Rush's illustrious career.

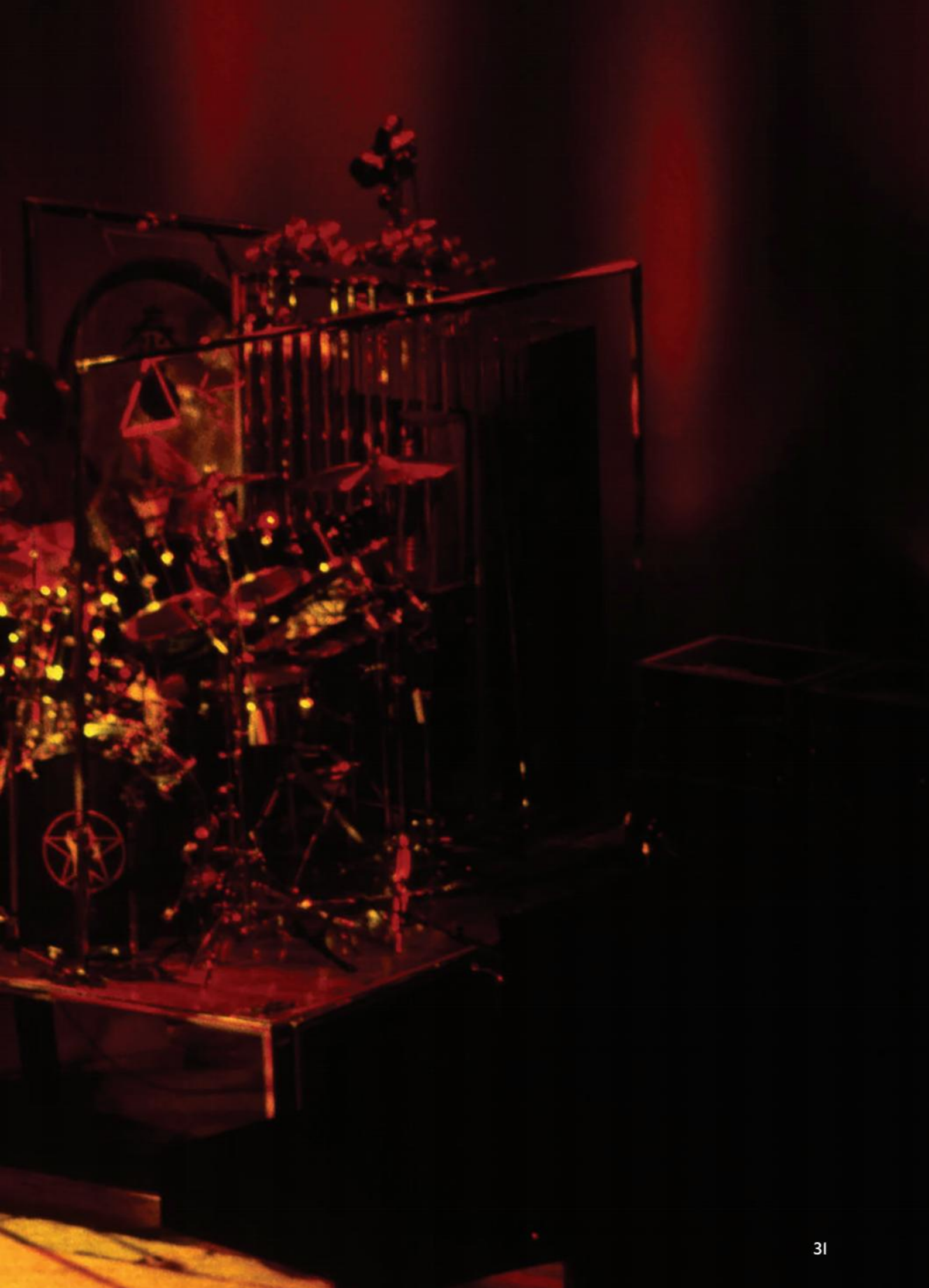
JUNO AWARDS

In 1975, the band won their first ever award at the Juno Music Awards. The Juno Awards are presented annually to Canadian musical artists and bands to acknowledge their artistic and technical achievements in all aspects of music. New members of the Canadian Music Hall of Fame are also inducted as part of the awards ceremony. They won the Most Promising Group of the Year Award in 1975. This was followed by their first major title when they won Group of the Year in 1978. Rush then became one of the first groups ever to win Group of the Year twice in a row when they won in 1979. They were given a special award in 1990 in recognition of their achievements throughout the 1980s. Rush were also given the title of Canadian Artist of the 1980s, a huge accolade for the band.

Following the eighties, Rush continued to win Juno Awards for their more modern stylings. In 1991 they won the Best Rock or Metal Album for *Presto*, and again in 1992 for the album *Roll the Bones*. Rush have picked up another five Juno awards since then. In 1994 they won the Hall of Fame award, then picked up a further two wins for Music DVD of the Year, with *Rush in Rio* and *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage*, in 2004 and 2011 respectively. A victory in the Best Rock Album category came in 2013 for *Clockwork Angels*, and Rush's incredible winning streak came to a close in 2015 when they picked up the coveted Humanitarian Award. For Rush to still be picking up awards forty years after their first win really shows the great respect that the people of Canada and the entire music industry holds for Rush.

‘What is a master but a master student? There’s a responsibility on you to keep getting better.’
– NEIL PEART





GRAMMY AWARDS

Despite being nominated for Grammy Awards on seven separate occasions since 1981, Rush have never won a Grammy. Some of the band's fans have called this a disgrace and feel that Rush should be recognised for their contribution to the history of American Music, blaming the judges for their poor decision making.

In 1981 the band received the first nomination for Best Rock Instrumental Performance for the song *YYZ*, however this was beaten by The Police with *Behind My Camel*. In 1991 they were again nominated for Best Rock Instrumental Performance for *Where's My Thing?*, which sadly lost to Eric Johnson's with *Cliffs of Dover*, anyone remember that?

Rush received further nominations for Best Rock Instrumental Performance in 1995 for *Leave That Thing Alone* which lost to Pink Floyd's *Marooned*. The next defeat came in 2004, when *O Bateria* was nominated following a Rush hiatus, and ended up losing to Brian Wilson's song *Mrs O Leary's Cow* – another memorable classic!

In 2007 the band were nominated for the track *Malignant Narcissism*, and were widely tipped to win after being overlooked so many times before. In fact some bookmakers made them such overwhelming favourites that they stopped taking bets. Unfortunately the award that year went to Bruce Springsteen's *Once Upon a time in the West*.

The next for Rush in Best Rock Instrumental Performance came in 2008, when their contribution to a charity album called *Songs for Tibet* was nominated. *Hope (Live for the Art of Peace)* was beaten to the award by Frank Zappa's *Peaches En Regalia*.

Rush looked like they might finally take home a coveted Grammy award in 2010 when *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* was nominated for Best Long Form Music Video, however they were cruelly snubbed once more when the prize went to the Doors for the *When You're Strange* documentary.

OTHER AWARDS

Despite the numerous disappointments at the Grammy Awards, Rush have been wildly successful in receiving accolades from outside the music industry. This is evidenced in this list of miscellaneous awards taken from the official Rush website.

- **DECEMBER 1990** Rush win the Mayor's Award at the Toronto Music Awards.
- **OCTOBER 1992** Rush receive the Harold Moon Award by the Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada.
- **MAY 1993** Rush are inducted into the Harvard Lampoon and named Musicians of the Millennium.
- **OCTOBER 1993** Rush receive the Toronto Arts Award.
- **MARCH 1994** Rush are inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame
- **MAY 1996** Lee, Lifeson and Peart are made Officers of the Order of Canada, the first rock musicians so honoured.
- **DECEMBER 1996** *Performance* magazine, a publication for the touring industry, nominate Rush as Rock Act of the Year for their 1996 Performance Readers Poll Awards.
- **MAY 1997** The Foundation Forum and F Musicfest announce Rush as the recipient of the Concrete/Foundation's Outstanding Contribution to Music Award.
- **MAY 1999** Rush are inducted into Canada's Walk Of Fame in Toronto.
- **JANUARY 2000** Rush top JAM! Music's online poll, awarding them the title of Best Canadian Musicians of All Time.
- **2003** Rush are inducted into the CMW Canadian Music Industry Hall of Fame.
- **2009** The song *Tom Sawyer* is ranked No. 19 on VH1's 100 Greatest Hard Rock Songs.
- **MARCH 2010** Rush are inducted into the Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame.

- **JUNE 2010** Rush receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located at 6752 Hollywood Boulevard.

INDIVIDUAL TITLES FROM MAGAZINES

Rush have always been popular with music magazine writers and editors and often feature in polls for the greatest guitarist of the year or even of all time. Geddy Lee has been named Best Bass Player by *Guitar Player* magazine no less than six times. In addition he has also won the Best Rock Bass Player of the Decade for the 1990s from *Bass Player* magazine, and is in *Guitar Player* magazine's Bass Hall of Fame. Alex Lifeson is a two-time winner of Best Rock Guitarist from *Guitar Player* magazine, winning in both 1984 and 2008. He holds the record for the widest gap between victories showing the success of the band in modern times. He has also been named runner up in the competition on no less than four occasions in 1982, 1983, 1985 and 1986. Neil Peart was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1983, and is also a nine-time winner of *Modern Drummer* magazine's Drummer of the Year award. Peart won the award an incredible seven years in a row from 1980–1986, then again in 2006 and 2008. He has also been named as the Best Drummer of the 1980s by the same magazine.



CHAPTER ONE

Rush was formed in 1968 in Toronto, Canada. The original line-up consisted of Alex Lifeson (guitar), John Rutsey (drums) and Jeff Jones (bassist and vocals), although Jones quickly left the band and was replaced by Geddy Lee. Over the next three years Rush underwent several line-up changes whilst performing small gigs in the local area. The band also appointed their first manager in 1971, who also happened to be a regular attendee. Ray Daniels became the band's first manager on the back of making himself known to the band at early shows. He represented the band for a long period of time and became friends with the group's members.

Lee has recalled, 'We were playing a lot of high schools. You'd pull up in Magnetawan, Ontario, set up your gear and start playing and the crowd would be looking at you to say, "What is this? I can't dance to this!" So we started by being unpopular on the high school circuit. And then, when we turned eighteen, we became unpopular on the bar circuit because we were too loud.'

After gaining stability in the line-up and honing their live skills Rush came to release their first single *Not Fade Away*, a cover of the Buddy Holly song, in 1973. Side B contained an original composition, *You Can't Fight It*, credited to Lee and Rutsey. Unfortunately the single made very little impact commercially. Rush placed the blame for this on their record company, Mercury Records and decided to form their own label, which they named Moon Records. With the aid of Ray Daniels and the newly enlisted engineer Terry Brown, the band released their self-titled debut album in 1974, but critics were less than thrilled, considering the release to be highly derivative of Led Zeppelin.

Rush peaked at No. 105 in the American Billboard 200 charts. The album sold over half a million records in America alone, and was the only album to feature Rutsey before he left the band for health reasons. Rutsey wrote some lyrics for the debut, but never submitted them to the band and new lyrics had to be thrown together at the last minute.

It was not until Rush gained some airplay for their second single *Working Man* from WMMS Radio in Ohio that the band were able to generate some interest from the industry. The single was released on their Moon Records label, but seeing that people were starting to take notice, Mercury Records also decided to re-release the single. Until this point their own label Moon Records had only sold 3,500 copies of the *Rush* album but once listeners of the Donna Halper show heard the music, the station was inundated with phone calls asking how to purchase *Rush*. In response to the demand the band also agreed a deal with Mercury Records in the US to re-release the album.

Immediately after the release of the debut album in 1974, Rutsey resigned due to health difficulties stemming from diabetes and a general distaste for touring. His last performance with the band was on 25 July 1974 at Centennial Hall in London, Ontario. Rush held auditions and eventually selected Neil Peart as Rutsey's replacement.

Peart officially joined the band on 29 July 1974, two weeks before the group's first US tour. They performed their first concert together, opening for Uriah Heep and Manfred Mann with an attendance of over 11,000 people at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In addition to becoming the band's drummer, Peart assumed the role of principal lyricist from Lee, who had very little interest in writing, despite penning the lyrics of the band's first album. Instead, Lee, along with Lifeson, focused primarily on the musical aspects of Rush.

The arrival of Peart brought an influx of new ideas and creativity, and the music became more progressive with influences taken from fantasy literature and right-wing ideology – in particular the writing of Ayn Rand.

Fly by Night saw the inclusion of the band's first epic mini-tale *By-Tor and the Snow Dog*. However, despite these many differences some of the music and songs still closely mirrored the blues style found on Rush's debut. The album *Fly by the Night* was undoubtedly the most successful album the band had released so far and started to become recognised on a wider scale. Unfortunately the album still only peaked at No. 113 in the American Billboard 200 charts and was actually less popular than its predecessor with local radio playlists. Critics rated the album an average of three-and-a-half out of five stars. All Music reviewer Greg Prato said, 'the album may not be one of Rush's finest albums, but it is one of their most important – it showed that the young band was leaving their Zep-isms behind in favour of a more challenging and original direction'.

Following on from the limited success of *Fly by Night*, Rush released *Caress of Steel* in 1975. *Caress of Steel* is a five-track hard rock album featuring two extended multi-chapter songs, *The Necromancer* and *The Fountain of Lamneth*. Some critics described *Caress of Steel* as, 'unfocused and an audacious move for the band because of the placement of two back-to-back protracted songs, as well as a heavier reliance on atmospherics and story-telling, a large deviation from *Fly*





by Night'. Intended to be the band's first break-through album, *Caress of Steel* sold below expectations and the promotional tour consisted of small venues which led to the moniker the 'Down the Tubes Tour'. The album actually only reached No. 148 in the Billboard Charts. However it did eventually achieve gold certification and sold in excess of 500,000 copies in the US alone.

The album performed disappointingly commercially and Rush were put under pressure from their record label to produce a more mainstream release. However, Rush refused to bow to these demands and created the excellent *2112*, which featured a twenty-minute title track divided into seven sections.

Alex Lifeson remembers making the decision to stick to Rush's own creative style, and has since stated, 'I remember clearly saying, "OK, screw it. We're may go down in flames, but at least we know that we've done it our way." There's no way we're gonna remake the first record just because that's what the record company wants and they're worried about sales. So we dove into *2112* and there's a little more angst in that record than with *Caress of Steel*'s *The Fountain of Lamneth*, which was structurally the same sort of thing.'

2112 provided Rush's first taste of commercial success and their first platinum album in Canada. The release was supported by a hugely successful tour, which featured sell-out dates across Canada. *2112* sold well in excess of three million copies worldwide and peaked at No. 61 in the US charts.

In spite of its commercial success the album was not without its controversies. The ideas of right-wing darling Ayn Rand, a writer and philosopher who captured the attention of many during the Cold War era, heavily inspired the work. Rush credited 'her genius' in the liner notes, and were very vocal about their respect for her ideology. As Geddy Lee enthused, 'I think she's brought forth a lot of concepts and philosophies that have confirmed for us a lot of different things. I've just found it very positive. I've found it very positive. I've found a lot of truth in what she writes.'

This later resulted in a particularly scathing piece by Miles of *NME*, which was published in 1978, and centred on the band's political beliefs. This was somewhat of a hatchet job, and the band's fixation on the writings of Ayn Rand seriously damaged their reputation in the UK.

'All the classic hallmarks of the right-wing are there: the pseudo-religious language, which extends right down to calling the touring crew – road masters instead of road managers. The use of a quasi-mystical symbol – the naked man confronting the red star of socialism (at least I suppose that's what it's supposed to be). It's all there... They are actually very nice guys. They don't sit there in jackboots pulling the wings off flies. They are polite, charming even, naïve – roaming the concert circuits preaching what to me seems like proto-fascism like a leper without a bell... Make sure that next time you see them, you see them with your eyes open, and know what you see. I, for one, don't like it.'

Rush have always denied that despite finding inspiration in the work of Ayn Rand, they do not hold any right-wing political views, and Alex Lifeson has since described feeling very depressed by the backlash over her inclusion on the liner notes. In 2016 he described his reaction to the controversy in *Rolling Stone* magazine:

'I'm a very liberal guy. I always have been. I remember during our second tour of England, we did an interview with a journalist, who was very hard-left socialist, for *New Musical Express*. Ayn Rand wasn't quite as contentious as she is today. But he set forth his point of view, and then Neil took the opposing view, as more of an exercise than anything. And they ran it as this big exposé. It said that we were Nazis and we would leave our grandmothers starving in the street because we were so selfish and uncaring.'

Ged's a child of a Holocaust survivor. It was just such a stupid, stupid thing. That's the way the press works sometimes. We got over it but they dogged us for the longest time. And we were

perceived as some sort of ultra-right-wing rock band, when to be honest, I had no political interests at all at that time. I think that was true of really all of us.'



CHAPTER TWO

Despite the brewing controversy in the UK, Rush retreated to Rockfield Studios in Wales to record 1977's *A Farewell to Kings* and 1978's *Hemispheres*. These albums saw the band members expanding their use of progressive elements in their music. As Geddy Lee described it:

'As our tastes got more obscure we discovered more progressive rock-based bands like Yes, Van der Graaf Generator and King Crimson, and we were very inspired by those bands. They made us want to make our music more interesting and more complex and we tried to blend that with our own personalities to see what we could come up with that was indisputably us.'

Trademarks such as increased synthesiser usage, extended-length concept songs, and highly dynamic playing featuring complex time signature changes became a staple of Rush's compositions. To achieve a broader, more progressive palette of sound, Alex Lifeson began to experiment with classical and twelve-string guitars, and Geddy Lee

added bass-pedal synthesisers. Likewise, Peart's percussion became diversified in the form of triangles, glockenspiel, wood blocks, cowbells, timpani, gong and chimes. Beyond instrumental additions, the band kept in stride with the progressive rock movement by continuing to compose long, conceptual songs with science fiction and fantasy overtones. However, as the new decade approached, Rush gradually began to dispose of their older styles of music in favour of shorter, and sometimes softer, arrangements.

Permanent Waves was released in 1980, and represented the first dramatic shift in Rush's style of music via the introduction of reggae and New wave elements. Although a hard rock style was still evident, more and more synthesisers were introduced. Moreover, because of the limited airplay Rush's previous extended-length songs received, *Permanent Waves* included shorter, more radio-friendly songs such as *The Spirit of Radio* and *Freewill*, two tracks that helped *Permanent Waves* become Rush's first US Top 5 album; both songs continue to make appearances on classic rock radio stations in Canada and the United States to this day.

The album was recorded at Le Studio, Morin Heights, Quebec, and was mixed at Trident Studios in London, UK. *Permanent Waves* hit No. 4 in the Billboard Charts and was the band's fifth gold and eventually platinum selling album.

Whilst Rush's musical style and composition had shifted to a more radio friendly reggae style, Peart's lyrics had moved toward an expository tone with subject matters that dwelt less on fantastical or allegorical story-telling and more heavily on topics that explored humanistic, social and emotional elements. He had shifted away from his background with the usual science fiction and fantasy overtones being replaced by an almost philosophical tone.

Rush's popularity reached its pinnacle with the release of *Moving Pictures* in 1981, a near-flawless album that was developed yet not rambling. Peart recalled the period of musical transition in interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine:

‘When punk and new wave came, we were young enough to gently incorporate it into our music, rather than getting reactionary about it – like other musicians who I heard saying, “What are we supposed to do now, forget how to play?” We were fans enough to go, “Oh, we want that too.” And by *Moving Pictures*, we nailed it, learning how to be seamlessly complex and to compact a large arrangement into a concise statement.’

The album *Moving Pictures* essentially continued where *Permanent Waves* left off, extending the trend of highly accessible and commercially friendly pop-progressive rock that helped thrust them into the spotlight. It also featured a blend of the new age reggae and synthesised music mixed with their traditional blues rock. Commercially the album was Rush’s biggest success yet, reaching No. 3 and going quadruple platinum in the US. This was buoyed by the single *Tom Sawyer*, Rush’s most recognisable hit.

Tom Sawyer relies heavily on Geddy Lee’s synthesiser playing and the drumming techniques of Neil Peart. Geddy Lee has referred to the track as the Rush’s ‘defining piece of music and a great example of music from the early-eighties’. It is a staple of classic rock radio and reached No. 25 in the UK singles chart in October 1981. The track also peaked at No. 44 on the Billboard Hot 100 and at No. 8 on the Billboard Mainstream Rock chart. *Tom Sawyer* was one of five Rush songs inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame on 28 March 2010.

In the December 1985 Rush newsletter, drummer and lyricist Neil Peart stated:

‘*Tom Sawyer* was a collaboration between myself and Pye Dubois, an excellent lyricist who wrote the lyrics for Max Webster. His original lyrics were kind of a portrait of a modern day rebel, a free-spirited individualist striding through the world wide-eyed and purposeful. I added the themes of reconciling the boy and man in myself, and the difference between what people are and what others perceive them to be – namely me I guess.’

Moving Pictures was Rush's last album to feature an extended song, the eleven-minute *The Camera Eye*. The song also contained the band's heaviest usage of synthesisers up to that point, hinting that Rush's music was shifting direction once more.



CHAPTER THREE

Following the release of a live album *Exit... Stage Left*, Rush began recording their new album *Signals* at Le Studio, Quebec in April 1982. The band was now hugely famous after commercial success of *Moving Pictures* helped to make the band to a global phenomenon, and they were now well known worldwide. However, the members themselves had become disillusioned with their traditional style of music, and decided to branch out into a more electronic and radio friendly sound. The band signalled their latest style change and new mentality with the creation of their new album *Signals*.

The recording of *Signals* proved Rush's most difficult project thus far, as they struggled to refine the new sound that they were looking for. As Peart told *Rolling Stone*:

'A lot of the early fantasy stuff was just for fun. Because I didn't believe yet that I could put something real into a song. *Subdivisions* happened to be an anthem for a lot of people who grew up under those circumstances, and from then on,

I realised what I most wanted to put in a song was human experience.'

Released in 1982, *Signals* represented a drastic stylistic transformation. The aforementioned *Subdivisions* was one of three singles that were released from the album, the others being *Countdown* and *New World Man*. *New World Man* proved to be Rush's biggest hit to date; it went to No. 1 in Canada and was their highest charting single ever in the United States. Other more experimental album tracks such as *Digital Man*, *The Weapon* and *Chemistry* expanded the band's use of ska, reggae and funk. Although the band members consciously decided to move in this overall direction, they felt dissatisfied with long-time producer Terry Brown's studio treatment of *Signals* and parted ways with him in 1983. Brown had been with the band since 1974, but did not support the new direction the music was taking, being more comfortable with heavy guitars than synthesisers.

Signals was fairly well-received and it reached No. 10 in the American Albums chart, as this is usually centred around traditional pop bands, the placing is a notable achievement for the band. *Signals* also was certified platinum in the US after selling in excess of one million copies.

The style and production of *Signals* was augmented and taken to new heights on Rush's next album, 1984's *Grace Under Pressure*. It was Peart who named the release, borrowing the words of Ernest Hemingway to describe what the band had to go through after making the decision to leave Terry Brown.

Musically, Lee's use of sequencers and synthesisers remained the band's cornerstone, but this time his focus on new technology was complemented by Peart's adaptation of Simmons electronic drums and percussion. Peart had started to experiment with a wider variety of synthesised instruments and was so taken with this new sound that on some tracks the electronic drums replaced his traditional instrument completely.

Lifeson's contributions on the album were decidedly enhanced to act as an overreaction to the minimalistic role he played on *Signals*. Still, many of his trademark guitar textures remained intact in the form of open reggae chords, as well as funk and New wave rhythms. The combination of a new direction for all members of Rush meant that the *Grace Under Pressure* album was arguably Rush most artistic, and is stylistically different from anything else they released.

Grace Under Pressure reached No. 10 on the Billboard 200 and went platinum in the US on its release in 1984.

Producer Steve Lillywhite, who gleaned fame with successful productions for Simple Minds and U2, was enlisted by Rush to produce *Grace Under Pressure*. However, after receiving another offer he backed out at the last moment, much to the ire of Lee, Lifeson and Peart. Lee was so irked that he went on record to say, 'Steve Lillywhite is really not a man of his word... after agreeing to do our record, he got an offer from Simple Minds, changed his mind, blew us off, so it put us in a horrible position.'

Rush eventually hired Peter Henderson to co-produce and engineer the album instead.

In 1985 Rush released the album *Power Windows* and in 1987 they followed this up with the similarly styled *Hold Your Fire*. The music on these two albums gives far more emphasis and prominence to Lee's multi-layered synthesiser work. However the album marked a far less important role for Alex Lifeson who had begun to experiment with short bursts of sound and punchy, echoing guitar riffs. *Hold Your Fire* only went gold in November 1987, although it managed to peak at No. 13 on the Billboard 200. *Power Windows* was more or less a disaster commercially and critics stated, 'It has shown that Rush have taken their experiments with style too far and no longer care about their commerciality and radio airplay'.

Rolling Stone magazine's music critic Michael Azerrad dismissed the albums as 'musical muscle with little point, I give it 1.5 stars, and

an insult to Rush fans who had viewed their favourite power trio as the holy trinity but now see them as something of a sell-out.'

Nevertheless, their 1989 album *A Show of Hands* managed to surpass the gold album mark, reaching No. 21 on the Billboard 200. At this point, the group decided to change record labels from Mercury, who had worked with them since 1975 to Atlantic Records. After Rush's departure in 1989, Mercury released a two-volume compilation of their Rush catalogue but it proved largely unpopular as most of the fans had moved on.



CHAPTER FOUR

During the late eighties and early nineties Rush began to enter another transitional period in their musical style and taste. Up to this point the changes had been well received by critics and fans alike. However when on the 1989 album *Presto*, the band began to experiment with their style yet again, some fans thought that had taken the experimented too much and should return to their roots. The band eventually started to notice the fans response and to some extent their nineties albums reverted back to the blues rock and prog rock that had made them successful. They started to deviate from their eighties synthesiser style with the albums *Presto* and *Roll the Bones*.

Produced by record engineer and musician Rupert Hine, these two albums saw Rush shedding much of their keyboard-saturated sound. Beginning with 1989's *Presto*, the band opted for arrangements that were notably more guitar-centric than the previous two studio albums. Although synthesisers were still used in many songs, the

instrument was no longer featured as the centrepiece of Rush's compositions.

Continuing this trend, 1991's *Roll the Bones* extended the use of the standard three-instrument approach with even less focus on synthesisers than its predecessor. While musically these albums do not deviate significantly from a general pop-rock sound, Rush incorporated traces of other musical styles. *Roll the Bones*, for instance, exhibits funk and hip hop elements, and the instrumental track *Where's My Thing?* features several jazz components.

Roll the Bones became Rush's first US Top 5 album since 1981's *Moving Pictures* peaking at No. 3 on the Billboard 200. The album went platinum selling well in excess of one million copies. *Roll the Bones* marks further transition from the band's 1980s style to their sound in the 1990s. The roles of the instruments have generally been reversed; guitar is beginning to creep to the front of the song arrangements, while bursts of keyboard and organ are played in the background. *Dreamline* and *Roll the Bones* were popular radio staples of the early nineties, with the former reaching No. 1 on the Album Rock Tracks Chart, while *Where's My Thing?* became the band's third instrumental and was their second song to be nominated for a Grammy.

This trend to move away from the synthesisers was even more noticeable in both the 1993 album *Counterparts* and the 1996 album *Test for Echo*. Critics have described these as 'two of Rush's most guitar driven albums allowing Lifeson to truly showcase his talent which had been hidden through the late eighties.'

Counterparts became Rush's highest ever charting album in America where it reached No. 2 on the Billboard 200 chart. The album went platinum and sold over half a million copies in the USA and almost 150 thousand in Canada. The lyrics of *Counterparts* continue the trends of *Roll the Bones* with dark and emotional themes being the primary focus. Throughout the album, there is a distinct alternative rock influence, showcased through heavy-

sounding tracks like *Animate* and *Stick it Out*. The song topped the Mainstream Rock Tracks for four weeks in late 1993, becoming the band's fifth single to do so.

As for *Test for Echo*, this marked a further return to the bands more traditional rock roots. The band also chose to promote this album with a highly successful world tour. The album marks the final Rush work prior to the events in Neil Peart's life that put the band on hiatus for several years. Peart recorded a majority of his drum tracks for the album using traditional grip, after receiving drum lessons from jazz instructor Freddie Gruber.

The cover denotes the *Inukshuk* which is a stone figure in the shape of a human used to mark a food cache or hunting ground. The word is taken from *Inuk* meaning human and *Shuk* meaning substitute. The album reached No. 5 in the Billboard 200 charts and sold over half a million copies.

Rush's Test for Echo Tour was in support of the band's studio album *Test for Echo*. It was the band's first tour without an opening act, and was billed as 'An Evening With Rush'. The tour kicked off 19 October 1996 at the Knickerbocker Arena in Albany, New York and culminated on 4 July 4 1997 at the Corel Centre in Ottawa, Ontario. This was the only concert tour in which Rush played the epic song *2112* in its entirety.

After finishing the Test for Echo Tour in 1997, Neil Peart received some terrible news that changed the next five years for the band. His eldest daughter Selena had been killed in a car crash in California at the age of just nineteen. Only a few months later his long-term partner Jacqueline died of cancer; Peart always maintained it was because of the grief of losing their daughter and that his wife had simply given up the fight. Rush were forced into taking a five year hiatus during which time Peart decided to return to travelling and writing.

On 10 November 1998 a triple CD live album entitled *Different Stages* was released, dedicated to the memory of Selena and



Jacqueline. Mixed by producer Paul Northfield and engineered by Terry Brown, it contained three discs packed with recorded performances from the band's *Counterparts*, *Test for Echo*, and *A Farewell to Kings* tours, marking the fourth officially released live album by the band.

In early 2001 Peart announced to his band mates that he was ready to once again enter the studio and get back into the business of making music. With the help of producer Paul Northfield Rush returned in May 2002 with *Vapor Trails*, written and recorded in Toronto. To herald the band's comeback, the single and lead track from the album, *One Little Victory* was released to grab the attention of listeners with its rapid guitar and drum tempos.

Vapor Trails marked the first studio recording not to include a single synthesiser, organ or keyboard part since the early 1970s. While the album is almost completely guitar-driven, it is mostly devoid of any conventional sounding guitar solos, a conscious decision made by Lifeson during the writing process. The album was also the first non-compilation album to be released by the group in six years. Amazingly it was a huge success and reached No. 6 on the Billboard 200 as well as No. 3 in Canada. According to the band, the entire developmental process for *Vapor Trails* was extremely taxing and took approximately fourteen months to finish, by far the longest the band had ever spent writing and recording a studio album. The album was supported by an enormous tour, that included Rush's first-ever concerts in Mexico City and Brazil, where they played to some of the largest crowds of their career. The last night of this tour at the Maracanã Stadium in Rio was recorded and released as the three-disc live album and *DVD Rush in Rio* in 2003. The album proved an enormous success; it was nominated for a Grammy Award and has been certified seven-times platinum in the US.

To celebrate their thirtieth anniversary, June 2004 saw the release of *Feedback*, a studio EP recorded in suburban Toronto featuring eight covers of such artists as Cream, The Who and The Yardbirds,

bands that the members of Rush cite as inspirations at the time of the band's formation. The album was a commercial success and was praised by *Rhapsody* magazine who called it one of their ten favourite albums of all time. The album also charted well, reaching No. 19 in the Billboard 200. In the summer of 2004 Rush hit the road again for their 30th Anniversary Tour, playing dates in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. The tour was a huge success with demand for tickets leading to most venues selling out within hours.



CHAPTER FIVE

After their 30th Anniversary Tour and the release of the covers album, the band revealed their intention to begin writing new material in early 2006. Lifeson and Lee began to write some songs from their studio in Toronto whilst Peart, who was settling into his newly married life, simultaneously assumed his role of lyric writing while residing in California.

The following September, Rush chose to hire American producer Nick Raskulinecz to co-produce the album. The band officially entered Allaire Studios, in Shokan, New York in November 2006 in order to record the bulk of the material. Taking the band five weeks, the sessions ended in December. On 14 February 2007, an announcement was made on the official Rush website that the title of the new album would be *Snakes & Arrows*. The first single, entitled *Far Cry*, was released to North American radio stations on 12 March 2007 and reached No. 2 on the Media Base Mainstream and Radio and Records Charts.

Snakes & Arrows was released 1 May 2007 in North America, where it debuted at No. 3 in the Billboard 200 with approximately 93,000 units sold in its first week. It would go on to sell an estimated 611,000 copies worldwide, making it the latest in a series of Rush albums to go platinum. The most popular track *Malignant Narcissism* was nominated for a Grammy Award under the category Best Rock Instrumental Performance. The album was named as one of *Classic Rock* magazine's 'Ten Essential Progressive Rock Albums of the Decade'.

The Rush website, which was relaunched in March of 2007 in order support the new album, also announced that the band would embark on a tour to begin in the summer.

Rush began the Snakes & Arrows Tour in Atlanta, Georgia. The 2007 tour came to a close on October at Hartwall Arena in Helsinki, Finland. The 2008 portion of the tour started on April in San Juan, Puerto Rico at José Miguel Agrelot Coliseum and ended during July in Noblesville, Indiana at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre. The tour was Rush's most successful to date, grossing nearly \$65 million. Comprising 113 shows, it became the second longest tour Rush had ever done. It was the band's first successful world tour when it took in countries including Scotland, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

As the band neared the conclusion of their Snakes & Arrows Tour, they announced their first appearance on American television in over thirty years. Rush was interviewed by Stephen Colbert and they performed *Tom Sawyer* on The Colbert Report on July 16, 2008. Continuing to ride what one movie reviewer has called a 'pop culture wave', they also appeared at a live show in April 2009 for the comedy film *I Love You, Man*.

It wasn't until February 2009, that Rush next considered a new album. Despite their raised media profile and the success of *Snakes & Arrows* the band seemed to be more inclined to rest after their previous tour. However during a magazine interview in February

2009 Alex Lifeson remarked that the band had plans to begin working on a new album towards the end of the year with Nick Raskulinecz, the producer of *Snakes & Arrows*. The next news of the album came during their induction into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. Lee and Lifeson touched on future material during the interview, and Lee was quoted as saying, 'Just about a month and a half ago we had no songs. And now we've been writing and now we've got about six songs that we just love.'

Shortly after this interview Lifeson reconfirmed on the bands official website that they had already written a half-dozen songs and that there was the potential for two supporting tours, one planned for summer 2010 and a more extensive tour planned for summer 2011.

On 8 April 2010, both the official Rush website and PR Newswire announced that the band would embark on the Time Machine Tour. The first leg of the tour began on 29 June in Albuquerque, New Mexico and finished 17 October in Santiago, Chile at the National stadium. The set-list featured the album *Moving Pictures* played in its entirety, as well as the single *Caravan* and its B-side *BU2B*. Songs that featured on the band's next studio album, *Clockwork Angels*, which followed in 2012.

Clockwork Angels was sadly Rush's last studio album, as following the supporting tour Lifeson stated the band were taking some time off:

'We've committed to taking about a year off. We all agreed when we finished this tour we were going to take this time off and we weren't going to talk about band stuff or make any plans. We committed to a year, so that's going to take us through to the end of next summer, for sure. That's the minimum.'

Rush embarked on the R40 Tour celebrating Neil Peart's fortieth anniversary with the band in summer 2015. Sadly following the end of the tour Peart was forced to retire from Rush citing arthritis and tendinitis. The announcement was made in December 2015,

and despite Lifeson suggesting the band may continue, Rush was no more.

This brought to a close an incredible career spanning forty years. It had been a formative and emotional journey for both Rush and their fans. Rush's continued popularity today, shows the dedication of both a new generation and diehard fans. They have long been North American heroes and their impact on the many bands that followed them, ensures that Rush will not be forgotten any time soon.



DISCOGRAPHY



RUSH (MARCH 1974)

In 1973 Rush had originally recorded a single, *Not Fade Away* backed with *You Can't Fight It*. The single was released on the bands own label Moon Records but it only sold a few copies around Toronto. The A-side was the

Buddy Holly classic, while the b-side was a joint composition by Geddy Lee and drummer John Rutsey. Despite the failure of the single to attract any record deals they boldly decided to finance a complete album. To keep costs to a minimum the group took the option of the cheapest recording time available, which meant recording through the night at Eastern Sound Studios in Toronto. The fledgling band would go into the studio straight from a gig

to spend a few hours each night laying down the songs. Initially drummer Rutsey was going to focus on the lyrics, as he had expressed his disappointment at previous attempts they had come up with. However Rutsey was also struggling with his own views on what he wanted the band to do and eventually he tore up all the lyrics he had written and consequently never showed them to Lee and Lifeson. As if the schedule of recording between gigs wasn't hectic enough, it fell upon Geddy Lee to then add his own lyrics to the tunes they were working on. Because of the pressure they were under to record so quickly, the band had taken one eye off the production angle but eventually decided they were unhappy with the work that original engineer David Stock had done. With the management able to muster up additional funds, Terry Brown, a Brit living in Canada with his own recording facility was brought in and given two days to improve the recordings. Four tracks were remixed and two re-recorded entirely at Brown's Toronto Sound studios, whilst the single *Not Fade Away*, originally earmarked for the album was replaced with a new song *Finding My Way*, giving the album a greater punch in the process. Because of the tight financial constraints the band had made the album under, no thought had really been given to holding any money back for the artwork, which it has to be said does look like something of an afterthought. Moon Records originally pressed up only 3,500 copies of the album, which sold very quickly but before long Mercury Records signed the band and re-issued the record.

1. Finding My Way

It's hard to imagine the album's opening song nearly didn't make the album as it has proved to be a true Rush evergreen. The song is also highly typical of the band's early work, and in particular the heavy influence that Led Zeppelin had on the Canadian trio throughout the entire album. Both Lee's vocals and Lifeson's guitar were strongly compared to Plant and Page respectively, but all bands have to start

somewhere. *Finding My Way* is still one of the strongest tracks on the album with some powerful driving guitar from Lifeson.

2. Need Some Love

Time hasn't been so kind to this track, an extremely basic lyric from Lee and more Page inspired riffs from Lifeson don't leave a particularly lasting impression on the listener.

3. Take A Friend

A more adventurous track with its unusual guitar fade in at the beginning and some excellent solo work from Lifeson, which is offset by the song's middle-eight that gives a more commercial edge to the rest of the songs, more progressive leanings.

4. Here Again

One of the album's strongest tracks is this slow-paced number with a slightly bluesy feel to it. Geddy Lee's vocals are amongst his best work on the album and the whole thing is superbly rounded off by Lifeson's best solo on the record. At seven and a half minutes long it was also the longest track on the album, and the forerunner of lengthier tracks the band would subsequently record on later albums.

5. What You're Doing

Despite being another song that sounds like it could have been an out-take from Led Zeppelin's second or fourth album, *What You're Doing* is a good slice of early raw Rush and proved to be a popular live track. John Rutsey's drumming is particularly noteworthy on the instrumental middle-eight.

6. In the Mood

Not to be confused with the Glenn Miller tune, the only track on the album written solely by Geddy Lee, it has become something of a Rush standard, and has served the band well in concert throughout

its entire career. A straightforward rock riff with very basic lyrics it would in time prove to be at odds with what Rush would become synonymous with. However it is a perfect illustration of how simplicity can be the key to popularity and longevity.

7. Before and After

One of the most fascinating numbers on the album with its lengthy, guitar intro, and the tempo changes throughout are an indication of where Rush took their music on future recordings.

8. Working Man

Similar observations can be made about the album's closing track, but unlike *Before And After*, *Working Man* was another track that would become a hugely popular live track, and the band even played it on the 30th Anniversary Tour. Although lyrically it sent out a message extolling the virtues of the blue-collar worker, it wasn't a stance that Rush necessarily tried to cultivate in any way. Alex Lifeson's powerful guitar work is amongst his best on the album.



FLY BY NIGHT (FEBRUARY 1975)

Having enjoyed working with Terry Brown who had helped the band rescue the first album, the group returned to Brown's Toronto Sound for the second album. The most noticeable change that the engineer encountered was in the fact that Rush now had a new drummer. Rutsey had been at odds with Lee and Lifeson's desire to shift to the band into a more progressive direction and his departure resulted in Neil Peart taking over the drum stool. The band had tried out several drummers before Peart arrived to audition, none of whom had really impressed them. Peart's major influence at the time was Keith Moon and as soon as he started playing on his small Rogers kit, Lee and Lifeson knew he was different to most other guys they had heard. As Lifeson said, 'he played like a maniac. He was a really intense drummer.' Geddy Lee was totally won over by Peart's audition: 'after I heard Neil play I was convinced that he was the drummer for the band.' An added bonus was Peart's literary interest, and because neither Geddy Lee nor Alex Lifeson had much enthusiasm for lyrics they were happy for Peart to devote his attentions to the words.

As with the first album, the band was expected to deliver a finished product in a very short space of time with only ten days allocated for recording. As Terry Brown said of the sessions, **'In those days it was strange because you had nothing really to judge it by. All we knew were the tunes and the direction we wanted. So it was just a question of working ridiculous hours. I mean you just start with day one and make it to day two, and so on. There was no discussion of "is it okay, do we need to remix anything?" or "would you have rather done this or that?" When it was done, that was it. There was no time for discussion when the album was finished.'**

Made in the days of glorious vinyl, the album was very much an album of two sides, with the first four tracks acting as an all out power blast, contrasting with the more melodic and laid back numbers that made up the flip side.

1. Anthem

The changes that Neil Peart brought to the band were hugely evident in the opening song. His drumming prowess was clearly evident for all to hear but equally as important, he gave Rush compositions so much more vitality with his lyrics. The words here are clearly influenced by Ayn Rand, one of the major literary figures who made a profound affect on Peart around this time. The lyrics won no sympathy with the 'bleeding hearts', they attacked and the band made no apologies for its right wing stance, something they were criticised for as time went on. Musically it showed the direction Lee and Lifeson clearly wanted to go, and it's stop/start riffs became a huge trademark for the band.

2. Best I Can

One of the few tracks where Geddy Lee handled the lyrics, a stark comparison to Peart's efforts, though Lee's words are ideally suited to this ballsy rocker.

3. Beneath, Between and Behin

Another snappy fast rock number driven on by Peart's frenetic drumming and augmented by Lifeson's power chords and Lee's punchy bass lines. Peart's fanciful but thought-provoking lyrics once again show how much he had changed the band for the better.

4. By-Tor and the Snowdog

(i. At the Tobes of Hades, ii. Across the Styx, iii. Of the Battle)

The first number in the Rush canon that can be referred to as an 'epic'. Musically it was the most adventurous song to date, and at

nine-minutes-long, also the lengthiest. Divided into four parts it gave Alex Lifeson the opportunity to stretch out, particularly on the dramatic 'battle' section. Lyrically it was inspired by Rush's managers dogs, one of which, a German Shepherd, bit tour manager Howard Ungerleider causing him to refer to it as a 'biter' (by-tor, get it?) Peart turned it into a mini fantasy tale of good triumphing over evil.

5. Fly by Night

Kicking off side two of the original vinyl, the title track is one of Rush's most melodic and accessible numbers. Although potential single material, in-keeping with the climate of the day, Rush was very much an album band with little concern for the short-term popularity that singles could bring. Rush wanted to be in the business for the long journey that the songs lyrics allude to.

6. Making Memories

An even more melodic number with good use of acoustic guitars, the first of many times the band would incorporate the acoustic sound over the ensuing albums.

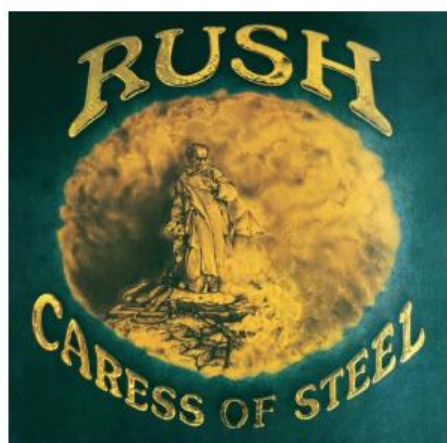
7. Rivendel

Rush unplugged, with Geddy and Alex providing the gentle acoustic sounds throughout and not a drum to be heard anywhere. Peart's lyrics are once again inspired by a notable literary figure, this time Tolkein and his world-famous fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*.

8. In The End

Continuing the softly, softly approach with it's acoustic intro, Lifeson then crashes in with some great power chords that along with Peart's powerful drumming push the song on, concluding the album with the same gusto it opened with.





CARESS OF STEEL (SEPTEMBER 1975)

When Rush returned to Toronto Sound in July 1975, Terry Brown was fully established as an integral part of the band's recorded output. Having moved a step forward with *Fly by Night* the band fully intended to move things on again with the third album. With the additional exuberance and solid platform that Neil Peart had brought to the group they felt confident enough of expanding and experiment further with their compositions. Peart had a lyrical idea that he wanted to see expanded over several songs, all brought together on one side of an album that could be experienced by the listener as separate songs or as one long piece. With all three in agreement in developing longer, more progressive songs, it was arguably Rush's attempt at a concept of sorts. However, once again they were under pressure from the word go as they were only given twelve days to record and mix the album. To do so with a bunch of straightforward rock songs is one thing but with the band deliberately steering the music into more challenging and complicated directions it was always going to be tough in such a short space of time. In expecting so much from themselves in so little time clearly affected the results and *Caress of Steel* is generally regarded by Rush aficionados as the weakest album the band has ever done. It did however see the start of the collaboration with graphic designer Hugh Syme that continues to the present day. His artwork that adorns the cover is arguably the best thing about the whole album!

1. Bastille Day

Coming from a country with a strong French connection, it is no surprise the band tackled a song about the French Revolution. The heavy riff-laden song helps to illustrate the bloody struggle that

changed the course of French history, but sadly the flat production diminishes the potential impact.

2. I Think I'm Going Bald

The band definitely had a bad hair day when they came up with this one! Though the opening riff is in a similar vein to *Anthem* the comparisons end there, and lyrically this won't be remembered as one of Peart's finest moments. Is it the worst ever Rush song? You'd be hard pushed to argue the case for the defence.

3. Lakeside Park

Possibly the strongest number on the album sees the band romantically portraying a local beauty spot in their hometown of Toronto.

4. The Necromancer

(i. Into Darkness, ii. Under the Shadow, iii. Return of the Prince)

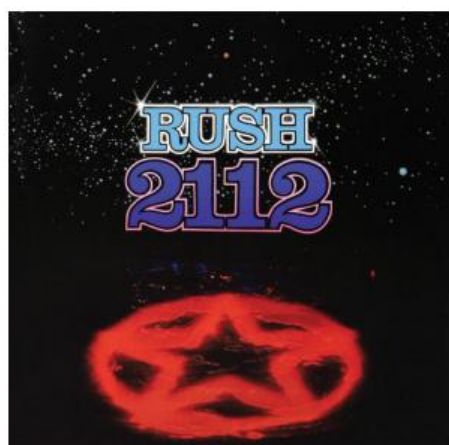
The first of two long compositions that close the album, *The Necromancer* was divided into three sections, and whilst it has all the typical Rush hallmarks of numerous chord and tempo changes the piece is very much the product of a band who know what they want to do but have yet to fully execute it in a successful way: that would come on the follow-up. Lyrically the fantasy story is once again influenced by Tolkein and also continues the adventures of By-Tor but without the same bite! *The Necromancer* is another example of why *Caress of Steel* is largely accepted as the weakest of all Rush's albums.

5. The Fountain of Lamneth

(i. In the Valley, ii. Didacts and Narpets, iii. No One at the Bridge, iv. Panacea, v. Bacchus Plateau, vi. The Fountain)

In the years when long tracks were the order of the day the album's closer clocks in at twenty minutes. *The Fountain of Lamneth* appears

to be partly influenced in its structure by Genesis' *Suppers Ready* though sadly it never attains the same levels of excitement or drama as the English bands twenty-minute masterpiece. Essentially it is five separate songs held together by the same lyrical theme. Whilst it does have its moments, such as Lifeson's solos in *No One at the Bridge* and *Bacchus Plateau*, and a drum solo in *Didacts and Narpets*, it is another example of a band still developing its craft but hasn't yet fully reached fruition.



2112 (MARCH 1976)

Partly due to the limited time-frame the band had in producing *Caress of Steel* the end results were not only disappointing but were greeted with very little enthusiasm from fans and critics alike. The album sold poorly and

the band was at its lowest ebb and even considered calling it a day. The record company clearly felt the groups desire to move into a more progressive direction was the wrong course to take.

With a difficult decision to make, years later Alex Lifeson commented, **'after *Caress of Steel* there was that lack of support... we had to decide whether we were going to say "Okay, we give up." We either break up, or we try to make another first album, or we say "fuck it" and do whatever we want. We decided on the third choice. We talked about the whole thing, and got really fired up between the three of us to really push on and not worry about what anyone else thought.'**

The fire in their bellies and the self-belief they shared paid dividends with *2112*. If *Caress of Steel* had been the prototype of a new Rush model, *2112* would prove to be the showroom version. Much of the album, had been written during a six month period as the band toured in promotion of *Caress of Steel*. Furthermore for the first time, the band managed to get the sort of studio time they knew was required to do justice to the complex arrangements envisaged, and spent a full month at Toronto Sound. The results were an album that was not only full of ideas but also benefited from a much stronger production and mix. Hugh Syme's simple but effective red star image that adorned the cover became an enduring Rush emblem and within a month the album had sold more than the first three combined. Despite external pressures, the three guys

had stuck to their guns and from this point on the band would never have cause to look back or question their own instincts ever again.

1. 2112

(i. Overture, ii. Temples of Syrinx, iii. Discovery, iv. Presentation, v. Oracle: The Dream, vi. Soliloquy, vii. The Grand Finale)

From the synthesiser opening it was apparent that Rush had produced something way in excess of their previous works. The use of synthesisers was a unique turning point in the group's career, with Geddy Lee and graphic designer Hugh Syme jointly tackling the keyboard effects. From herein, with Lifeson's power chords setting the scene, right through to the dramatic finale, in *2112* Rush had managed to produce its first truly conceptual and progressive masterpiece and the music is far more inspired and dynamic than the longer tracks on *Caress of Steel*. It is also one of the first songs in the Rush canon where Lifeson really gets to portray his six-string prowess to the full.

Lyrically, whilst at first glance it appears to be nothing more than a sci-fi fantasy, the obvious disapproval of oppressive regimes and collectives dominating and ignoring the skill and thoughts of the individual was very much the bands philosophy that they championed without shame.

2. A Passage to Bangkok

In stark contrast to the drama and intensity of side one's title track, the opening number on side two is a rather plodding riff, though it proved to be a popular live number. Having produced his best lyrics to date on the title track, Peart's homage to cannabis is not only highly uncharacteristic of his work in general but doesn't stand the test of time particularly well, coming across as a rather cheesy effort in the process.

3. The Twilight Zone

Another sci-fi tinged lyric from Peart fits perfectly with the rather dreamy style of the music. Good use of Lee's vocal overdubs and a tasty solo from Lifeson are all perfect illustrations of how superior the production was to any previous Rush album.

4. Lessons

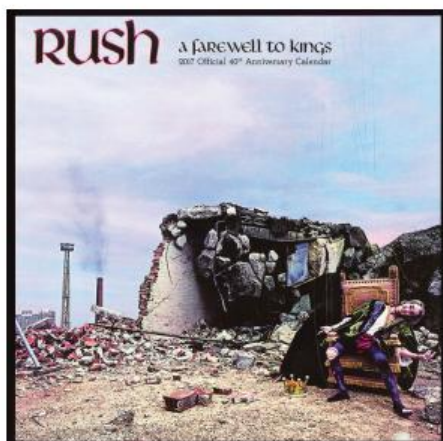
A rare solo composition from Alex Lifeson has shades of his sixties upbringing in it's delivery. Taking Geddy Lee's unique vocal style aside, there is evidence of many of the bands that Lifeson listened to in his youth such as The Who and the Yardbirds.

5. Tears

Geddy Lee also gets a self-penned number to his name in this atypical romantic ballad. This style is not something the band is really renowned for, and it would also prove to be one of the last lyrics Lee would write for the band. Hugh Syme's keyboards augment the song well.

6. Something for Nothing

Another example of Peart's Ayn Rand inspired philosophy is represented with the self-explanatory lyrics. But whatever criticisms the band received from a generally left-wing music press, they certainly practised what they preached and the album was ample proof of the bands desire to chose their own destiny. It's a fitting way to conclude a record that showcased the self-belief and determination of three young but highly talented young men.



A FAREWELL TO KINGS (SEPTEMBER 1977)

Because of the intermission that was the double live album, it would be a year and a half before the next studio album was ready to be recorded: But due to the continued rise in success it also resulted in a change of environment.

Not only had *2112* kicked off a mass of additional interest in North America, but also the double live set, always a popular format with rock fans, helped to introduce Rush to European audiences. As it was Rush ventured across the Atlantic in the summer of 1977 for its first ever-European tour consisting of a fortnight of shows in the UK and Sweden. After finishing with a show at the Liverpool Empire the band went into Rockfield Studios, tucked deep away in the wilds of Wales. As Neil Peart said:

‘We found the seclusion and the mellow atmosphere at Rockfield very conducive to work, (there’s little else to do!) And we made good use of the varied facilities, including a huge acoustic room, and the unique opportunity to record outdoors.’

Three weeks were spent in the leafy remote studio, followed by a couple of weeks at Advision in London where they mixed the recordings down.

The band had in their own words seen the live album as ‘the end of the beginning, a milestone to mark the close of chapter one in the annals of Rush.’

Born-out by the relatively lengthy gap between albums this was also seen as a positive in Peart’s eyes:

‘We have had a year and a half between studio albums, a very welcome creative hiatus, and a chance for the three of us to concentrate on our individual instruments, and the mastery of new ones to keep the music growing.’

This is perfectly illustrated by Peart's ever expanding use of various percussion instruments, Lee's continued development with synthesisers and Lifeson's numerous electric and acoustic six and twelve string guitars that were put to great use on the recording.

With Terry Brown once again involved as engineer and co-producer, the recording also saw the band further its artistic bent and production skills, and was a natural step forward from *2112*. Hugh Syme's cover art was also the most accomplished to adorn a Rush album up to that point.

1. A Farewell to Kings

Peart's comment about recording outdoors is reflected in the title tracks intro best described by Peart himself:

'The birds of Rockfield can be heard out on the Elizabethan-jazz flavoured introduction. This song is one of our favourites on the album, as it seems to encapsulate everything that we want Rush to represent.'

2. Xanadu

'Certainly the most complex and multi-textured piece we have ever attempted. It also contains one of Alex's most emotive and lyrical guitar solo's, as well as a very dramatic vocal from Geddy' wrote Peart shortly after the album's release. This epic eleven-minute tour-de-force became a huge concert favourite and is another example of the development of Rush's improved compositional skills.

3. Closer to the Heart

Rush has never been a band that sets out to write hit singles but by accident rather than design this was clearly the band's most accessible song to date, and with countless albums since, it still remains one of the most instant and unforgettable songs in the entire Rush catalogue. Peart's development as a lyricist is also evident with his intelligent use of word play throughout.

4. Cinderella Man

Another more melodic and laid-back number, it marked by now, a rare lyrical contribution by Geddy Lee. From this point Peart would almost exclusively handle the lyric writing. Ironic perhaps, given it's one of Lee's better efforts with the pen.

5. Madrigal

One of the most beautifully melodic pieces the band ever wrote. Despite the 'heavy metal' tag the band received, songs such as this are a perfect example of why Rush should never be labelled in such a banal way.

6. Cygnus X-1 (Prologue, 1, 2, 3)

By now Rush had fully mastered the extended and grandiose style of composition as perfectly illustrated on this classic track. From the haunting, eerie intro to the climactic ending it's Rush at their very progressive best. It's full of time changes and intricate structures, which was Rush's forte at the time. No one did it better than Rush, and Rush didn't do it better than on *Cygnus X-1*. The band's obvious enthusiasm for the piece was reflected with the ambitious footnote 'to be continued.'



HEMISPHERES (OCTOBER 1978)

With the band having enjoyed the experience of recording at Rockfield Studios in Wales, and pleased with the results, they returned there for the following album. *A Farewell to Kings* had been a relatively easy album to make, but *Hemispheres* was a much tougher album to create. Coming straight off the back of a lengthy bout of touring, with just a week's break before going to Wales the guys were pretty exhausted. They initially spent two weeks at a house, a mile from the studio, where they rehearsed and wrote. In essence two weeks wasn't enough and as they moved into the studio to start recording not all the material had been written but they were still confident everything would be done in time, and that a few days holiday around Europe could be tagged on at the end of recording. Alas things took longer than expected, and even after running over time on the recordings at Rockfield, Geddy Lee still needed to add some vocals at Advision during the mixing process, where the band spent the next ten days. To compound matters Terry Brown was unhappy with the results but without being able to pinpoint the precise reasons why, he took the tapes to various other studios. It was at Trident Studios in London where he was finally able to nail down the problems, resulting in the entire album being re-mixed there. Because of the pressure the band was under, it's not an album they look back on as fondly as the previous couple of efforts. In particular, Alex Lifeson recalled:

'We'd had a lot of really good fortune with *A Farewell to Kings* at Advision. *Hemispheres* had a different feel to it, and it was just not happening. By the end of it we were happy to go. It's a dark album for me to listen to. I suppose I associate the whole

tenseness and frustration and really hard work that went into that.'

Later, Geddy Lee summed up his feeling as well:

'With every album, we want it to be that much more perfect. With *Hemispheres* the material changed and the approach to recording the material had to change to a certain degree because the music called for a different tone.'

1. Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres

(i. Prelude, ii. Apollo: Bringer of Wisdom, iii. Dionysus: Bringer of Love, iv. Armageddon: The Battle of Heart and Mind, v.

Cygnus: Bringer of Balance, vi. The Sphere: A Kind of Dream)

Having made the bold decision to continue the story of *Cygnus X-1*, the band decided to honour its promise with this eighteen-minute opus that occupied the first side of the original vinyl release and was divided into six parts. Generally it was received less favourably although the idea of two sides of the brain at odds with each other, and the battle between heart and mind, was a fascinating concept to construct a song around. Generally it lacks the dynamics of its counterpart from *A Farewell to Kings* but despite that it does have its moments, and the final two parts of the saga are particularly noteworthy, but it proved to be the last time Rush would tackle such a lengthy and ambitious composition.

2. Circumstances

In contrast to the epic title track, *Circumstances* is a short, snappy number that would prove to set the foundation for the bands future direction. For the trio from a country with strong French connections it was also only a matter of time before they incorporated the French language into their lyrics, as is the case here.

3. The Trees

A track that clearly resonates with the fans from the bands homeland

due to Peart's lyrics about the oppression of maple trees by the bigger and mightier oaks; a thinly disguised comment on Canada's treatment by its more powerful neighbour the US, as seen through the drummers eyes.

4. La Villa Strangiato (An Exercise in Self-Indulgence)

The subtitle of this nine-minute instrumental might seem apt to the bands detractors but in reality the piece is superbly constructed and is anything but a self-rambling, over indulgent exercise. The subtitle appears to primarily be directed at critics, much to the amusement of the band. The fact that they chose to present it as a piece with twelve parts, with such titles as *Danforth And Pape* and *Never Turn Your Back on a Monster* was clearly a sign of a band taking the mick out of both themselves and their critics. That it is still a hugely popular and dramatic part of Rush concerts proves what a great track it is.





PERMANENT WAVES (JANUARY 1980)

Having made the previous two albums in the UK, Rush were back on familiar territory for *Permanent Waves* and decamped to Le Studio in Morin Heights, Quebec in September 1979.

Not just because *Hemispheres* had proved to be a difficult album to make but in light of the changing musical climates of the late seventies, Rush opted to take a fresh approach for this album. The New wave of music that had taken a stronghold in the late seventies, although appearing to attack and dislodge the old guard also offered a band of Rush's intelligence an opportunity to embrace the new sounds. The group was more than happy to open their ears and minds to new styles and were also fully aware that to continue along the same musical path could potentially spell a recipe for disaster. Whilst their inevitable compulsion for intricate and demanding song construction continued, the ability to do it with new sounds and incorporating other musical styles insured Rush would keep one step ahead of most other bands that fell into the trap of repeating a previously successful winning formula. The one thing that the New wave had brought to the attention of the band was that shorter well-constructed songs could have as much impact on the listener as lengthy complex numbers. It's not that Rush abandoned their prowess for skilful and technical playing, but more the fact that from now on, greater emphasis was placed on the composition first and foremost. Although blinkered fans saw it as the start of a downhill slope, in truth Rush's music became more compact, but crafted to a greater degree, and in general Peart's lyrics became both more mature and challenging in equal measures. Three of the songs also benefited from being written long before they went into the studio and had been played regularly as Neil Peart explained,

‘we were able to play *The Spirit of Radio*, *Freewill*, and *Jacob’s Ladder* during our sound check every day, and the former two we had worked into the new show.’

On its release the album divided fans and even the cover met with controversy. A joint concept by Peart and Hugh Syme, it originally showed the Chicago Tribune headline ‘Dewey Defeats Truman’ that was originally, prematurely published during the 1948 Presidential election. The embarrassed paper objected to the reproduction of its headline and the artwork was withdrawn and re-done with the heading blanked out, making the original version a sought after collectors artefact.

1. The Spirit of Radio

Rush’s decision to shift the emphasis towards shorter and punchier tracks was well rewarded, with *The Spirit of Radio* becoming a relatively big commercial single for the group. The reggae-flavoured middle-eight may have come as something of a shock for many Rush fans but if those fans missed the point Peart’s lyrics drove home the message that it was perfectly possible to attain success and popularity without compromising the art form, and Rush was one-step ahead of the opposition regarding that. It was probably also the first song that inspired a whole generation of fans to indulge in a spot of ‘air drumming’ at the gigs!

2. Free Will

For Neil Peart the very notion that our destiny was pre-defined was utter poppycock as conveyed on this excellent track. It’s also a good example of the band’s greater use of keyboards to fill the sound out, something that would become a familiar pattern on the band’s early eighties albums.

3. Jacob’s Ladder

Although, the band had produced the second part of *Cygnus X-1* on

Hemispheres, from a musical perspective, with its dark, brooding style, this track could have been ideally suited to fill that role. It's also one of the few tracks on the album to carry on in a similar vein to the previous record. Once again the keyboards play a big part in the song, but in doing so it alienated some fans that craved more Alex Lifeson power chords and guitar solos.

4. Entre Nous

Very much a track that illustrates Rush's desire to construct 'songs' rather than grand musical opuses. It's almost accessible enough by Rush's standards to be considered mainstream!

5. Different Strings

The one and only ballad on the album is another short but sweet song, rounded off with a great burst of guitar by Lifeson, though sadly just as it looks like potentially developing into something special, it just fades out. It is also fascinating to listen to for its relative simplicity: A rarity with Rush tracks up to this point. Geddy Lee spoke about the song during an interview for *Guitar Player* magazine:

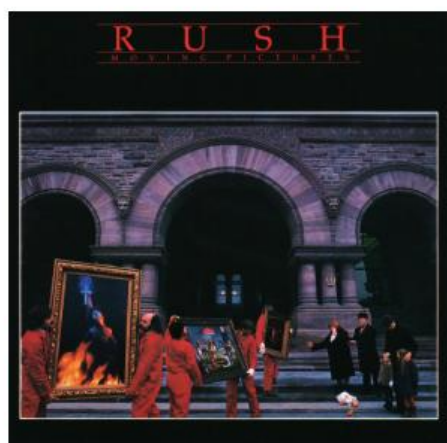
'Harmonics become quite an integral part of the piece. The bass part is very simple – a punctuating sort of rhythm – but in between the notes I popped a couple of harmonics on two (different) strings at the fifth fret.'

6. Natural Science

(i. Tide Pools, ii. Hyperspace, iii. Permanent Waves)

Rush hadn't totally abandoned the longer more progressive numbers and closed the album with this nine-and-a-half minute piece that is constructed in three parts. It flows seamlessly from a gentle, acoustic beginning and graduates into a swirling sea of progressive rock guaranteed to keep the older Rush fans happy in the process. Even greater attention was focused on the production as Neil Peart explained:

‘Alex and I splashed oars in the lake with shivering hands to record the *Tide Pools* effects, voices and guitar sounds were sent out over the lake to make use of it’s natural echo, the tympani was recorded outdoors, guitar amps were strung all over the building to take advantage of as many different sounds as possible.’



MOVING PICTURES (FEBRUARY 1981)

When the band recorded *Permanent Waves* Neil Peart spoke highly of Le Studio, which was used for the first time with that album:

‘Le Studio is a wonderful place, nestled in a valley of the Laurentian Mountains about sixty miles north of Montreal. It is situated on 250 acres of hilly, wooded land, surrounding a private lake. At one end of the lake is the studio, with the luxurious and comfortable guest-house situated at the other, about a mile away. The recording facilities are, of course, nothing less than excellent in every way. The room itself features one whole wall of glass, overlooking a spectacular view of the lake and the mountains. This is in direct contrast to most studios, which are more in the way of being isolated, timeless vaults, which in that respect of course, are not necessarily bad.’

It was therefore no surprise that Rush went back to Le Studio for the follow-up in October 1980. The same team, with Terry Brown at the controls, set out to continue the style they had produced to great effect with *Permanent Waves*. Two of the songs had been played in concert and again this meant that by the time they were ready to record, both the band and engineer were very familiar with the compositions and this helped the recording process no end. As far as Terry Brown was concerned, with the team’s own skills improving and the technology of the day, they created what he considered to be the best drum sound they had ever produced. However the technology also proved to present the band with some serious problems as Peart recalled:

‘The digital mastering machine, the mixdown computer, and one of the multi-track machines, gave up their collective ghosts

one after the other, driving poor Terry Brown to distraction, and setting us two weeks behind in the end. After much technical tearing of hair and gnashing of teeth, the machine maladies were finally put right.'

Despite the problems Rush produced an album that today is generally regarded as amongst their best work. Alex Lifeson in particular rates the album highly and several of the tracks have become an integral part of Rush gigs.

1. Tom Sawyer

Considered an absolute Rush classic by many fans, it combined good use of synthesisers with Lifeson's fiery guitar, and driven on with great power by the rhythm section. The lyrics were a rare collaboration with Max Webster's Pye Dubois who gave his original idea called *Louis The Warrior* to Peart, who adapted it to the well know literary character.

2. Red Barchetta

Another hugely popular track in the Rush canon sees Lifeson's punchy guitar work take preference to the keyboard sounds, whilst Peart dabbles in a bit of automotive nostalgia with lyrics that most young men could identify with. As males make up the vast majority of Rush's fan base there wasn't likely to be too many complaints about that.

3. YYZ

This instrumental that not only showcases the musical virtuosity of all three-band members but also illustrates the open-minded approach and willingness to embrace musical areas most other 'heavy' bands would ignore with it's funky rhythms and guitar chops.

4. Limelight

To most Rush fans *Limelight* is the stand out track on the album.

Lifeson's power chords are the driving force behind what is an excellent example of a power trio at its best. Peart's lyrics deal honestly about the drawbacks of fame and there can't be many bands that are as truthful as Rush, as encapsulated in the line 'I can't pretend a stranger is a long-awaited friend'.

5. The Camera Eye

In-keeping with the previous record the band threw in one lengthy number and this eleven-minute piece saw Rush pushing their new-found enthusiasm for keyboards to a greater extent. Much of the songs rhythm is played through a combination of drums and synthesisers but Lifeson also gets to put in a cracking solo and the combination of guitar and keyboard compliment each other extremely well.

6. Witch Hunt (Part III of 'Fear')

By far and away one of the darkest and most eerie pieces Rush has ever written, *Witch Hunt* is a superb observation of human prejudices, augmented by some very heavy Lifeson riffs, and with the keyboards once again adding to the overall production as opposed to dominating it. *Part I* and *Part II* subsequently appeared on the next two studio releases.

7. Vital Signs

The band had already showed a willingness to incorporate new styles with the reggae vamp in *The Spirit of Radio* but with *Vital Signs* funk and reggae rhythms dominated the songs structure. This wasn't well received by all fans with many considering it as something of a filler track. The music however, with its strong use of synths yet again, was perfect for the digital-age inspired lyrics.



SIGNALS (SEPTEMBER 1982)

Signals instantly proved a huge success upon its release, shooting to No. 1 in the charts in Canada, and reaching an admirable No. 3 and No. 10 in the UK and the US respectively. The writing of the album began in 1981, during sound

checks on the Moving Pictures Tour, which they taped, but the majority of *Signals* was written and rehearsed in early 1982. Geddy Lee has said that the group were aware of how easy it would have been to play it safe and produce another *Moving Pictures*, but chose to explore a new direction. The album relies heavily on synthesisers with less emphasis on the guitar-oriented riffs which had been the focus of the Rush sound in the seventies. Lee considered *Signals* as the beginning of a new era for the band, but has since said it was a difficult to make, and that it took a lot longer than usual for the band to achieve the right feel for each song.

Signals took Rush in a new direction once more, with a stripped down, modern sound. Although it didn't showcase the same stadium anthems that had thrilled listeners on *Moving Pictures*, it was still a concise and undeniably enjoyable release.

In Steve Gett's 1985 Rush biography *Success Under Pressure*, Lifeson states:

'*Moving Pictures*, for instance, was a very lush, full-sounding LP, where the guitars were double, triple, even quadruple tracked. But with *Signals*, we wanted to get a more angular sound, where everything had its place and there was a little more perspective to all the instruments. The focus was not so much on the guitar being "here" and the drums being "there". It was a little more spread out in different percentages. So that took a bit of experimenting, which in turn meant more time in the studio.'

Signals showcases Lee's bass lines at the forefront of the mix and is home to some of the bassist's all-time best playing, the stripped-down production puts the muscle front-and-centre and Lifeson's guitars are artfully utilised more for texture than ornate riffs.

The new sound was certainly divisive, splitting opinion from Rush's fanbase right down the middle. One of the hardest things in rock music is trying to follow a smash hit. After the critical success of *Moving Pictures* it seemed unlikely that Rush would be able to create anything that wouldn't seem a little pale in comparison, but *Signals* proved a worthy successor. It is not their strongest album, but several stand-out tracks and a fascinating diversity of sound make it a notable addition to the Rush canon.

1. Subdivisions

The album opener is one of the band's signature tracks, signaling a heavier transition into synthesizers. Rush gradually merged electronics into their music over the years, so new tracks like *Subdivisions* did not come as a shock to long-time fans, and this is a well-deserved public favourite to this day.

2. The Analog Kid

As Peart has described it, this is 'a very up-tempo rocker, with some kind of a dynamic contrast for the choruses.' It is certainly a stand-out track, even when following the excellent album opener. The combination of these two tracks starting the album is really a statement of intent from Rush, and shows that they are absolutely not messing around.

3. Chemistry

Chemistry was actually written by the band simultaneously while they apart. Lee wrote the keyboard melody for the bridge section, Lifeson wrote the guitar riff for the verse, and Peart wrote the drum beat for the chorus. Unusually for Rush, Lee and Lifeson came with

the concept and title for the song and presented rough lyrics for Peart to polish. This resulted in some clever yet still accessible lyrics that are backed up by brilliant instrumentation. Despite this, many fans were underwhelmed by the track and it can get lost amongst the stronger numbers on the album.

4. Digital Man

This is a ska-influenced number that was also heavily inspired by funk, with Lee's bass line described as 'so funky and fluid its almost laughable'. This number carries the energy from *Chemistry*, with both songs further explore Police-style techno-reggae. There were many comparisons between the two band's styles at the time but it is worth noting that *Signals* was released a year before the Police's monster-hit album *Synchronicity*. *Digital Man* has always proved divisive amongst fans, and even more so amongst the band, as it is said to be one of the key causes for the rift with long-time producer Terry Brown.

5. The Weapon

This was Part II of the *Fear* series of songs, but is considered by many to be the weakest instalment. Fans have stated that they find it 'light', but there is no doubting the quality of the amazing melodic intro that is played out again in the chorus. This, combined with hard-hitting lyrics, make it a worthy addition to the album, and a very interesting listen that examines how our fear is used as a weapon against us – a theme that is still very pertinent today.

6. New World Man

This is an excellent track with some lovely vocal lines, that has remained in the public consciousness as a Rush classic. This was the quickest composed track from the album, being written in a matter of only hours, and was originally intended to be a companion piece to *Digital Man*. Although not a pair, the two songs complement each other nicely on this album, and *New World Man* has been compared





to other Rush hits such as *Tom Sawyer* – fitting praise for a nuanced and highly memorable track.

7. Losing it

This track is perhaps best known for its brilliant guest solo by electric violinist Ben Mink. To cater for the part, Rush put down the basic track for a jazz-oriented solo section and invited Mink to the studio which included him multi-tracking various notes to resemble a complete string section, and the result is stunning. It's a deep cut with a luxurious feel that has stood the test of time well and is a track that showcases Rush at their classiest.

8. Countdown

This song was one of the most synthesiser heavy tracks on the album. It was released to honour the launch of NASA's STS-1 Columbia, an event the band attended. There is very clever use of radio communications from the launch worked into the track. Touchingly the song was actually used as a wake-up song during the vessel's last successful flight. Despite not being a heavy-rocker, the track itself oozes excitement, and brings the album to a close on a high note. It's a unique piece, that really shows Rush's ability to diversify their sound, and to create something poetic and deeply moving.



GRACE UNDER PRESSURE (APRIL 1984)

Recording for *Grace Under Pressure* took place at one of Rush's favourite haunts Le Studio in Morin-Heights, Quebec, between November 1983 and March 1984. Released shortly after on 12 April 1984, *Grace Under Pressure* is undoubtedly one of Rush's bleakest, most pessimistic albums.

It was another synthesiser heavy release, that captured the mood of the times perfectly, thanks to sombre, brooding lyrics juxtaposed with a bright sound created by producer and engineer Peter Henderson.

Grace Under Pressure introduced a style that sounded unforced and legitimately contemporary, and despite enjoying a traditionally rock-leaning fanbase, the album enjoyed commercial success. *Grace Under Pressure* reached No. 10 on the Billboard 200 and went in to the Top 5 in the UK. During the tour supporting their previous album, *Signals*, the members of Rush began by meeting with producer Terry Brown in Miami, informing him that they wanted to move on. They'd become increasingly unhappy with the sound of the *Signals* album, and they were also keen to see how they would work with someone other than Brown. Despite their decision to part ways, Rush decided to include a small tribute to Brown in the liner notes of *Grace Under Pressure*, which reads, 'et toujours notre bon vieil ami – Broon.' The quote translates to 'and always our good old friend – Brown.' It was also the stress of this parting that inspired the album title, taken from an Ernest Hemingway quote in which he describes his definition of 'guts'.

1. Distant Early Warning

This is probably one of Rush's most well-known songs due to its

prominence on several compilation albums and live tours. Despite this it never charted significantly in the United States. This track sets the album off to a strong start with jarring dystopian lyrics juxtaposed with Rush's classically meticulous production.

2. Afterimage

The track was dedicated to Robbie Whelan, a friend of the band who worked as an assistant engineer on some of Rush's earlier albums, most notably *Moving Pictures* and *Signals*. The track deals with the loss of a friend and the emotional aftermath that follows. Oddly, *Afterimage* was only ever released as a single in Japan.

3. Red Sector A

This is a song by Rush that provides a first-person account of a nameless protagonist living in an unspecified prison camp setting. Neil Peart has revealed that the song contains deliberately placed overtones of the Holocaust. Geddy Lee also revealed in a latter interview that it was also based on his mothers experiences in concentration camps, which puts a very emotional spin on what is already a haunting track.

4. The Enemy Within

This is Part I of the *Fear* trilogy, and features choppy, offbeat guitar chording that once again drew comparisons between Rush and The Police. This is a prime example of Alex Lifeson being content to give up his previously onmipresent guitar sound for synths and sharp strums. There are none of the showy solos that he was previously well known for and it's a true marker of the Rush sound at this time.

5. The Body Electric

This track tells the story of an android that has escaped and gone on the run. It features the very distinctive '1-0-0-1-0-0-1' binary code chorus, which is set to a colossal, gravitational, mechanistic

rhythm. The track also contains a very distinctive guitar solo which Lifeson has described as 'pretty bizarre' due to the use of an added harmonising effect with a delay.

6. Kid Gloves

The guitar work on this album reaches its experimental pinnacle on this track, with Lifeson really stretching out and exploring the effects available to the band. This horn laced number is evidence that Rush can successfully diversify their style, whilst still maintaining their signature sound, and it features some glorious guitar work.

7. Red Lenses

Here we have an unusual track, which stands out on the album, although maybe not for the right reasons. *Grace Under Pressure* carries a melancholic feeling throughout, but here we find a laid-back number that evokes some of the avant-garde King Crimson output in the eighties. Unfortunately this track has been generally poorly received by fans, and most consider that it could be struck from the album altogether and not be missed.

8. Between the Wheels

A brilliant album closer, this is a slower number that features a monstrously heavy riff during the verses and some brilliantly heavy guitar work during the chorus. It is also memorable for an incredible Lifeson's solo that is fast, fluid, and brimming with emotion. Menacing keyboards bring the whole number together, and it would be fair to say that this could be one of Rush's most underrated tracks.



POWER WINDOWS (OCTOBER 1985)

Power Windows was the first Rush album to be produced by Peter Collins, the album was recorded at The Manor in England, Air Studios in Montserrat and at Sarm East Studios in London.

The album again sold well and peaked at No. 10 in American Pop Album charts. Incidentally, *Power Windows* was the first Rush album to ever be released directly to CD.

Power Windows launched an era in which the band expanded into new sonic directions, and featured synths heavily. It was also the album where Geddy switched to using a Wal bass, made by a small English company. He'd used the Wal as his main bass all the way through the *Roll the Bones* album and tour. Neil's lyrics focused primarily on various manifestations of power.

In interview with *Guitar World* in 1986 Lee recalled the creation of *Power Windows* and had the following reflections:

'We realized with *Grace Under Pressure* that we were not a techno-pop band. We pretended to be from time to time, and we realised there are some very dramatic differences between us and that kind of music that will never allow us to have that same sound.'

'We have a rhythm section that is hyperactive and very alive and most of those techno-pop sounds are very cool, controlled, minimalistic rhythm sections, no wonder the snare sounds so great. There's nothing else there. That sound was so seductive, that big hi-fi sound. We realised why a lot of those things weren't part of our music, but we realised we could take some of them and use them. We stopped denying what we were a little bit on this album. Last year we were obsessed with getting new sounds.'

This streamlined new approach was what made *Power Windows* such a success, and overall it is a highly memorable album that marked a turning point in Rush's career and in their distinctive sound.

1. The Big Money

Released as the album's debut single, this track reached No. 45 in the American Billboard singles chart. *The Big Money* is interesting as it marked the first signs of a potential move away from synthesizers for Rush, leaning back toward progressive rock. The lyrics, written by drummer Neil Peart, reflect on the power of 'big money' and the sheer magnitude of trade in the modern global economy, particularly during the 1980s.

2. Grand Designs

This is a track overflowing with excitement, the powerful pulsating bass lines come together with some of Neil Peart's most unusual, complex, and exciting drum fills. Unfortunately the upbeat sound, and the introduction especially don't resonate with all fans, and the track has been accused of sounding too peppy and overproduced.

3. Manhattan Project

It would be hard to make a case for any other track being the album's stand-out (aside from perhaps *Big Money*) *Manhattan Project* looms head and shoulders above the rest of this record. It is an iconic track and a fan favourite that was a live stalwart until Rush's disbandment. The dreamlike quality of the track and some truly profound lyrics are joined by a catchy chorus and excellent production; it is a true Rush classic.

4. Marathon

This underrated gem will forever be remembered for its stupendous chorus 'from first to last/the peak is never passed', which displays

Lee's vocal talents perfectly. This combines with a wonderful bass line, and a sound that is a lot more rock-oriented than other numbers on the album. Although this track lacks the immediate impact of many other Rush hits, it has been a slow-burner that is still cherished by fans today.

5. Territories

The slow and atmospheric intro builds in to another track that is a little more rock-oriented, whilst still maintaining the use of poppy synths. Lyrically this is not Rush's strongest work, and although it is still an enjoyable listen, one could be forgiven for describing it as the weakest track on this album. The production feels a little overdone in parts, and it definitely lacks the subtle sound achieved on previous releases such as *Signals*.

6. Middletown Dreams

This is another synth heavy track, and although it undoubtedly features some fabulous vocal lines and guitar licks, *Middletown Dreams* cannot help but feel a little dated. There is a very classically eighties sound to the track, it is undeniably catchy but arguably not that memorable overall.

7. Emotion Detector

This proved one of the trickiest songs to lay down from the album, as Lifeson recalled:

'We thought *Emotion Detector* would be a breeze but it was the killer. It was very difficult to get the mood right. I'm still not really sold on the song. It never ended up sounding the way I hoped it would. Half of *Emotion Detector* was done in one pass.'

It is another synth driven number, although this time slower and not far from a ballad. It has never been a big hit with fans or with Rush themselves, who have neglected to add it to their live sets.

8. Mystic Rhythms

The album closer was a decent success for the band when it charted at No. 21 in the American singles charts, making it one of the groups most commercially successful releases up to that point, it even became the opening song for NBC News during the late eighties. This is a classic track, with some hypnotic drumming, and is the perfect choice to end this excellent album.



HOLD YOUR FIRE (SEPTEMBER 1987)

Like *Power Windows* before it, *Hold Your Fire* was also mostly recorded in England and is often seen as the culmination of Rush's synth-laden releases. Despite this *Hold Your Fire* is still quite different than the three preceding albums that are often included in their synth era. *Hold Your Fire* has the most conventionally pop-like structure of Rush's synth period, as opposed to the morose and introspective *Grace Under Pressure* and the bass-driven, but less vocally focused *Power Windows*.

Over all the musicianship is probably at one of the lowest in Rush's history, fortunately with the trio's incredible virtuosity that isn't saying too much. The issue lies more in the music itself than the performance, as the musical palette of prog-rooted pop rock coated in synths doesn't provide enough room for everybody to stretch themselves musically.

Alex's guitar playing consists mostly of shiny arpeggios and reverb soaked chords, while Neil focuses on driving the song along rather than making use of masterful drumming techniques. Geddy sings wonderfully on this album, and his bass playing is brilliant, yet far more melodic than usual. In the grand scheme of things, it's Ged who is the star of this show, but as a whole this is one of Rush's weaker musical outings. In light of this, the album only reached No. 13 in the charts, becoming the first Rush album not to make the Top 10 since the 1978 release *Hemispheres*.

Lee has spoken fairly harshly of certain tracks on the album; in 2009 he told *Blender* magazine:

'You're supposed to be crappy when you make your first three or four records. But even in our middle period, we did this song

called *Tai Shan*, using a poem Peart wrote about climbing a mountain in China, and when I listen to that, it's like "Bzzt." Error. We should have known better.'

Although 'crappy' may be a little harsh, the album is certainly of its time, with the pop sound of the eighties reigning supreme. Despite this, there are certainly high points as well as lows and the record provides an interesting snap shot of Rush and of popular culture at that time.

1. Force Ten

This track was released as a promotional single for the album, immediately made it clear that Rush hadn't given up on the pop sound of *Hold Your Fire*. Showcasing punchy drum work and flashy synthesiser bursts from Geddy Lee's keyboard, the track teems with an urgent, busy bassline and driving snare drum pattern. This number is totally representative of where the album is headed and makes the perfect opener to carry the listener off into their Rush journey.

2. Time Stand Still

This was the first ever Rush song to feature an outside vocalist as Peart and Lee felt the lyrics would benefit from the addition of a female voice. For this honour Rush chose Aimee Mann from 'Til Tuesday for the lead vocals. *Time Stand Still* was a minor hit single in the UK and has since been covered by the pop singer, Nelly Furtado. It is one of the more better tracks from this album, with a brilliant bridge and some memorable fills.

3. Open Secrets

This track is an excellent showcase of Lifeson's guitar skills, it features not only a killer guitar lick, but most one of his most emotive and evocative guitar solos. Combined with Geddy Lee's pulsating bass work, there is a lot to like about this track. The introspective lyrics



are some of the best from the album, and *Open Secrets* is cherished as a great example of what Rush could achieve despite their many style changes over the years.

4. Second Nature

From one of the best album numbers to one of the worst. *Second Nature* seems like a filler, and has never made much of an impact with fans. It is seen by many as a slightly over-blown, yet still bland, power ballad. This is a shame as some excellent guitar picking and catchy vocals mean that there was potential in this track, it was just sadly never fully realised here.

5. Prime Mover

One of the album's more energetic numbers, *Prime Mover* harks back to Rush's past rockers with an excellent intro and a solid bass line throughout. This track is classic Rush, a complex framework of rhythms that stop, start and repeat. Strong lyrics by Peart add to the excellent musicianship, and this number really shows what Rush are capable of when operating at full strength.

6. Lock and Key

This is perhaps the catchiest song on the album; the epic chorus is instantly memorable. The soaring intro vocals inject a sense of urgency and fear about the darker side of humanity. However, the track has been criticised for lacking subtlety in the lyrical message (the suppressed primal instincts of man). Nonetheless it is a solid and well-loved track that is one of the finer numbers from the album.

7. Mission

'Hold your fire/keep it burning bright' – Rush certainly do on this track that features an excellent example of how to seamlessly blend electronic percussion into acoustic drumming from Neil Peart. It is a slow and synth laden track that ends with a fanciful guitar solo by

Lifeson and then fades out, a feature that may have been better suited to an album closer. Interestingly there is an unreleased version of Mission that features heavy use of a brass band, hopefully we get to hear it one day.

8. Turn the Page

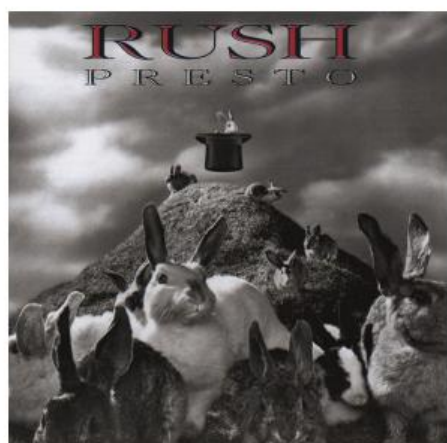
This fast paced number seems like it may be better suited to the previous *Power Windows* album, as it features some snappy bass grooves paired with an explosive chorus. It is highly guitar-oriented and energetic, which makes it one of the most enjoyable listens on this album.

9. Tai Shan

This is definitely one of Rush's most experimental songs, though most would say not one of their most successful. Whilst some have praised the mystical atmosphere, and excellent instrumentation, most felt it was the band trying too hard and falling too short. As Lee put it '... we should have known better.' Ultimately, this song may be unfairly maligned as it's actually an interesting piece, just not what most would hope for from Rush.

10. High Water

The album is brought to a close with another unusual piece from Rush. *High Water* is progressively conceptual with a vast, almost exotic sound. The musicianship shines through, with sublime guitars, infectious vocal lines and an interesting drum pattern from Neil Peart. Although it is a great track, it doesn't quite feel epic enough to bring the album to a satisfying conclusion, and there are other numbers that may have been better suited as a closing track.



PRESTO (NOVEMBER 1989)

This was the first album Rush produced with Atlantic Records, after their long association with Mercury Records. The album feels like a fresh start in many ways, including lyrically. On *Presto* drummer and lyricist Neil Peart provided more experience-based lyrics, and the individual tracks on the album stood alone, rather than as part of an overarching narrative.

Presto is very much a transitional album, and can be pinpointed as the release on which Rush started embracing their past once more. The album's indistinct sonic vibe falls somewhere between Rush's synth-driven early eighties era and their guitar-heavy return of later years. Disappointingly for many fans, the move away from synths did not mark a return to Rush's previous progressive rock sound, instead the trio carried on by retaining the innate pop sound present on their recent albums.

Despite this, the recording of *Presto* was an experience that Rush thoroughly enjoyed, the trio have stated that they found the lack of a deadline freeing. Lifeson relayed the process to *Music Express*:

'It was amazing how smoothly things went. Writing and recording albums is usually a tense, stressful period, but this one went amazing well. We were so well prepared that we had the album written, recorded and finished a month ahead of schedule, which for us is unbelievable... We've probably gained a lot of new fans and lost some of our old ones with the last couple of releases, with *Presto*, I think we'll get some of the old ones back.'

One strange quirk at the time was the fact that the first side of *Presto* was much longer than the second, forcing Rush to instruct fans to play the A-side much louder to compensate for sound loss. This is

certainly a divisive album, and is considered by most fans to be a bit of a mixed bag. However the transitional nature of the record provides a great window into the development of the band's sound as they moved between styles. It may be different, but it is good to hear the band stretching out musically and not relying on an established sound.

1. Show Don't Tell

This became Rush' first ever US No. 1 in the Mainstream Rock Tracks Chart. As the album opener it grabs the listener with rapid fire bursts of choppy riffing, immediately sets the tone for what is to come. There is a greater emphasis on space in the arrangements than previously, and the number features some brilliant melodic bass playing.

2. Chain Lightning

This track leads the album to greater heights with a short but potent guitar lead by Lifeson that complements the fantastic bass throughout. The track employs a unique hipster riff with exciting motion, and the rich vocal effects actually work well during the choruses. Although not the pinnacle of what Rush can achieve, the first two tracks set the album up well.

3. The Pass

Presto really gets in to full swing here, with one of Peart's strongest lyrical efforts. Dealing with the controversial topic of teenage suicide, Rush take the listener on an emotional journey, doing so with tact and grace. This is undoubtedly an excellent showcase for Geddy Lee, who provides perfectly executed vocals in a slightly lower pitch than his signature wail of earlier years, as well as pleasing bass chords that complement the piece perfectly.

4. War Paint

An solid Rush rocker at the outset, *War Paint* builds in to something

more complex as it progresses, driven by Lifeson's layered arpeggios and fills. Interesting musical passages and lyrics make this a great example of Rush's eighties output, and the track is brought to the close by Lifeson's best lead on the album.

5. Scars

This is a stand-out track for Peart's drumming, unfortunately not much else. On *Scars*, Peart blends a mix of acoustic and electronic drums into a towering tribal pattern, inspired by a bicycle tour he took in Cameroon. It is a very unusual sounding track for Rush, with a synth funk bass and a dance beat. Although one must applaud the band for their interest in sonic experimentation, most fans feel that this number falls flat.

6. Presto

This eponymous number has a lot of potential, but frustratingly it often feels that just as the track is about the break through and really open up, it ebbs once more. This is largely thanks to disjointed arrangements that interrupt the verses and stifle the track's momentum. In a way it is fitting that this track should share its name with the album, as they both feel a little hit and miss; there is a lot of promise yet promise that is never fully realised.

7. Superconductor

Whilst *Superconductor* is one of the harder tracks on the album, it feels hampered by some cheesy backing vocals that stifle the number. Despite an interesting middle section and some solid rock riffs, this number never quite gets off the ground somehow. Uninspiring and slightly repetitive lyrics mean that this number, though enjoyable, doesn't shine like it could have.

8. Anagram (For Mongo)

Here we go from uninspiring lyrics to some of Rush's finest

wordplay, with the highlight of Side B, *Anagram*. On this track every line contains one or more words that are formed by using letters in another word from that same line, and certain lines contain anagrammed words for example, 'Miracles will have their claimers'. It is a highly enjoyable track with a melodic chorus and strong rock verses. Great electric riffing combined with clever lyrics make this one of Rush's most underrated tracks.

9. Red Tide

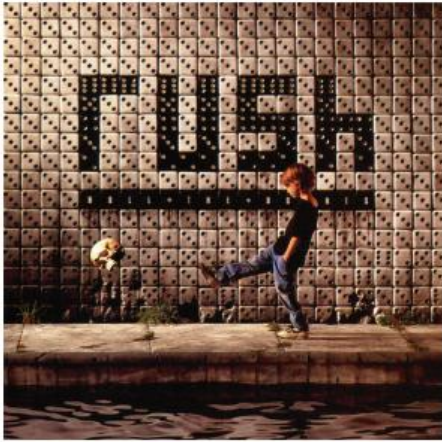
In an unusual move, Rush chose to use clean piano tones to complement their sound on this track. It is an interesting change from the keyboard and heavy synths that they had become known for and is a technique that probably could have been well utilised on previous albums. Unfortunately the gambit doesn't quite pay off and the resulting track is underwhelming.

10. Hand Over Fist

This is one of the commonly disliked songs on the album, with criticism usually being based around the fact that the lyrics make very little sense, and that it is a bit repetitious. The saving grace of *Hand Over Fist* is that it contains a light and funky guitar riff, yet unfortunately this is soon dissolved into over-textured beats and the aforementioned nonsensical lyrics.

11. Available Light

Piano is featured once again on this album closer, which is a moody track with slow, deliberate beat that builds in intensity, yet ultimately fizzles out. In terms of popularity it has been a slow-burner over the years, with the emotional and mellow sound taking its time to entrench itself in fan's hearts, however today many consider it to be amongst some of Rush's finest work.



ROLL THE BONES (SEPTEMBER 1991)

Roll the Bones became the group's first Top 5 album since the release of *Moving Pictures* in 1981, when the record peaked at No. 3 in the American Billboard 200 Album Chart. *Roll the Bones* was recorded at Le Studio in Morin-Heights,

Quebec and McClelland Place in Toronto, Ontario. Rupert Hine returned as co-producer, after previously producing *Presto*.

Roll the Bones marked a further transition from the band's eighties style to their sound in the nineties. The roles of the instruments have generally been reversed; guitar is beginning to creep to the front of the song arrangements, while bursts of keyboard and organ are played in the background. The album has a taste of rap, a bit of funk, and a bigger groove than fans expected from Rush at the time. Neil chose to be more straight-ahead, leaving room for Geddy's bass playing to be more aggressive.

In 1991 Geddy Lee called *Roll the Bones* a new beginning for Rush and reflected:

'The album is kind of based on the concept of chance. The way it affects our lives in obvious and not-so-obvious ways... I'm pleased with the way the band has been able to streamline the sound over the past couple of records, I think it's a positive change. I'm also pleased with the way we've been able to utilize a stronger sense of melody and vocal harmony.'

Neal Peart added to this, discussing his thought process behind the writing on *Roll the Bones* stating,

'No matter what kind of song you choose to play, you're betting your life on it, for good or ill, and what you believe is what you are. No one can ever be sure, in this best of all possible random universes.'

‘That’s why the essence of these songs is: if there’s a chance, you might as well take it, so what if some parts of life are a crap shoot? Get out there and shoot the crap. A random universe doesn’t have to be futile; we can change the odds, load the dice, and roll again... For anyone who hasn’t seen Groucho Marx’s game show *You Bet Your Life*, I mean that no one but Groucho knows the secret word, and one guess is as good as another... Anything can happen. That is called fate.’

1. Dreamline

One of the most popular Rush songs of all time this number reached No. 1 in the American Rock Music Charts in 1991. There’s not much to say about this track that every Rush fan doesn’t know already, it’s a classic track, and it feels like the perfect song to open the album, ushering the latest era of Rush.

2. Bravado

Next is the slower number, *Bravado*. This track has a lighter, almost pretty feel to it, which is certainly unusual in the Rush canon. The track is notable for Neal Peart’s incredibly complex drums at the end, and Geddy has spoken of this enthusing, ‘There’s an example of limb independence that rivals any drummer, anywhere. The fact that he nailed that in one take blows my mind.’

3. Roll the Bones

As title track from the album, this number features extensive use of electric guitars and keyboards, continuing to highlight the bands change in style. It’s a great indicator of where Rush were headed at the time of the release. This is an enduringly popular track with fans, that performed well commercially as a single, peaking at No. 9 in the American Rock Chart.

4. Face Up

Face Up is a solid straight-ahead guitar-centred rockers, but is hampered by that overly glossy production style that Rush favoured in the eighties. It is a little Rush-by-numbers, however still a very enjoyable track, and one that pleased fans of the band's more straightforward sound.

5. Where's My Thing

Featuring the humorous subtitle *Part IV: 'Gangster of Boats' Trilogy*, this track was nominated for a Grammy in 1991 but was one of Rush's many losses at the award show. This was the band's first instrumental since 1981, and is a very interesting number that really showcases Rush's fantastic musicianship.

6. The Big Wheel

A track that fits perfectly in to the album's theme of taking chances, Peart once explained that while *The Big Wheel* seems autobiographical, it's not – it's just a 'universal of that trade-off between innocence and experience.' This is another guitar-led rocker in the vein of *Face Up*.

7. Heresy

This song is about the fall of Communism in Russia and the impact it had on the rest of the world. Neil has said the drumbeat was inspired by his time in Togo, explaining, 'I was laying on a rooftop one night and heard two drummers playing the next valley, and the rhythm stuck in my head. When we started working on the song I realised that beat would complement it well.'

8. Ghost of a Chance

This track charted at No.2 on the U.S. Mainstream Rock Chart as a single, but despite its relative success, the song has rarely been played in live shows. *Ghost of a Chance* is Rush's answer to a ballad, and one

of the few love songs they ever released. It is a pleasingly entrancing track but the quality of the writing lets it down somewhat.

9. Neurotica

This is an unusual track. The light blending choruses are pushed by Lee, who dominates the verse with a heavy bass line. Adding to the infectious sound, Lifeson lets loose in the pre-chorus with straightforward but powerful guitar work. All in all it's a great track.

10. You Bet Your Life

This track brings the album to a close on a very upbeat, powerful, and melodic note. It's a great number to highlight the path that Rush were taking from high gloss to harder edged sounds, but it is the lyrics that really shine through on this number. They are interesting and philosophical, ensuring the album's over all theme is carried through to the very end.



COUNTERPARTS (OCTOBER 1993)

This was a hugely successful album for Rush that peaked at No. 2 in the Billboard 200, only losing out on the No. 1 spot to Pearl Jam's much-awaited album *Vs.* The lyrics on *Counterparts* continue the trend from *Roll the Bones*

with dark emotional themes being explored. The overall shift in tone that was evident on *Roll the Bones* was pursued further here, with a move back towards the aggressive guitar-based sounds of their formative years. This went down well with fans, many of whom had longed for the stripped back sound of the early-Rush, and the new sound certainly contributed to the album's fantastic commercial success.

The band were also pleased to be taking themselves firmly in this direction, as Alex Lifeson recalled in a 1993 interview:

'We've kinda shifted the interest back to the guitar. We've been talking about moving in that direction for quite a while, but certainly with this one we made a concerted effort to do that. The keyboards are much deeper in the mix. It was to sort of capture an energy that we used to have when it was more of a concentrated three-piece.'

'*Roll the Bones* sounded so much tougher live than in the studio, which is what we really wanted to capture with these songs on this record, to make sure it had that kind of impact. Just by the nature of the way we recorded it, using an engineer whose particular style is very straightforward – I mean, he just stuck the mics up and hit the record button in a very straight approach in terms of signal path from the instrument to the tape– that really helped us to capture that size and style.'

The album centres upon the theme of duality, as the term ‘counterparts’ is described as both ‘duplicate’ and ‘opposite’ – a definition that intrigued Neil that he contemplated to himself:

‘...considered in this way, contraries are reflections of each other, and not necessarily contradictions.’

Rush supported *Counterparts* with a four-month tour of the US and Canada. Unfortunately relations between the members were reportedly tense during that time, and they followed the tour with a long break, in which each member explored other creative interests.

1. Animate

The near complete shedding off, of the synthesiser is evident as *Animate* kicks off the album in style. The synthesiser is in the background of this pop-influenced rocker, with Lee’s bass and Peart’s drums front and centre. This number is unusually free in its composition, and shows a more smooth, less jarring side of Rush.

2. Stick It Out

The album continues with another heavy number here, which is reminiscent of Rush’s earlier work. The lyrics are humorous and slightly random, with a catchy chorus. This is a strong continuation of the album’s opener with a tough and coarse guitar-sound that fans love.

3. Cut to the Chase

This is a great number that rounds out a very strong opening trio of songs. *Cut to the Chase* demonstrates some wonderful shifts between Alex and Lee, it has a strong hard-hitting sound but still carries the free and easy feeling of *Animate*.

4. Nobody’s Hero

This track deals with the controversial issue of AIDS and HIV. It follows the death of a man called Ellis from the disease. He was a



friend of Neil Peart's and as such the lyrics are very powerful. The second part of the song is also rather dark, and follows the murder of a girl in Peart's hometown in Canada. The girl is believed to have been based on the murder of Peart's childhood friend Kristen French.

5. Between Sun & Moon

This is a light-hearted number that showcases an unusually laid-back approach by the band. It is notable for some stunning vocals from Lee, and shows how his voice has matured and aged to perfection over the years. His vocals really shine on this album, and are reminiscent of his solo work.

6. Alien Shore

Here we have a number from Rush that sounds more akin to arena rock than their usual output. It's a fun track, but doesn't carry through the quality of the album openers. The subject matter is interesting, dealing with gender/racial inequality, however it feels regressive compared to the rest of the album, moving back to Rush's synth-heavy eighties sound.

7. The Speed of Love

This has a similar feel to *Alien Shore*, and feels like a fairly generic addition to the album. It is an enjoyable listen but doesn't really push the style or theme forward. The keys are sparse, but present, the bass is at the forefront and the drums are appropriate, yet none of these really shine on this track.

8. Double Agent

This was one of the final tracks written for the album and Lee has described it as 'a complete exercise in self-indulgence'. Having come up with songs that were more complex in arrangement, Lee fancied a change of pace. This is evident in the bizarre spoken part that

features in the track. Although it won't go down as a classic, it is nice to see Rush having some fun here.

9. Leave That Thing Alone

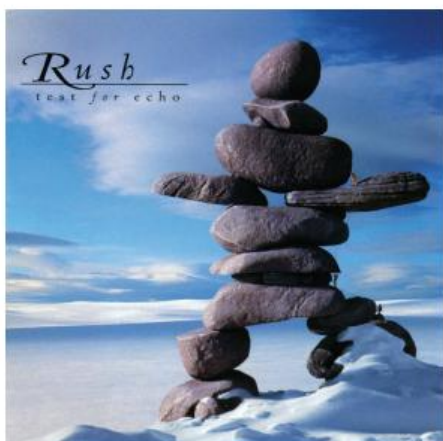
This track won Rush another Grammy nomination and became a stalwart of their live sets for many years. It is a tasteful and atmospheric instrumental that proved a big hit with fans. It is such a favourite that the track is also featured on the live albums *Different Stages* and *Rush in Rio*.

10. Cold Fire

This track performed relatively well as a single, peaking at No. 3 in the US Mainstream Rock Charts. Despite that success, the track has faded somewhat into obscurity. It is a solid number, that works well within the album but it falls slightly short of greatness, thanks in part to some overly pop-influenced vocals.

11. Everyday Glory

With its dark and emotional lyrical themes and some stunning drumming from Peart *Everyday Glory* is a strong album closer. As with *Cold Fire*, it isn't one of Rush's more memorable tracks but it doesn't let up on the energy and brings the album to a satisfactory close.



TEST FOR ECHO (SEPTEMBER 1996)

This album marks the final Rush work prior to the events in Neil Peart's life that put the band on hiatus for several years. *Test for Echo* sold in excess of half a million copies and reached No. 5 on the Billboard 200 chart.

The band returned after nearly a two-year hiatus with a power and ferocity that rivals some of their earliest material. From the metallic feel of the title track, to the driving force behind *Driven* and the heavy feel of *Dog Years*, Rush beefed-up their sound and evolved from the synth-drenched style of previous albums. The musical direction here harkens back to the hard rock sound of the group's earliest years but with a definite diffusion of lyrical themes.

Unfortunately the album can come across as sounding a little confused, and it has gone down in history as one of the weakest albums Rush made. Speaking on this Geddy Lee said:

'Test for Echo was a strange record in a sense – it doesn't really have a defined direction. I kind of felt like we were a bit burnt creatively. It was a creative low time for us.'

Whilst it is true that on first listen, the songs may be a bit thick, but once you get through this outer layer you can hear the real underlying genius of this record. A large part of this genius comes from Peart's incredible drumming, during the band's hiatus Peart had (unbelievably) been taking lessons, and his new and improved style really shines on this recording. His new technique came from the legendary drummer Freddie Gruber, as he told *Modern Drummer*: **'I did start with traditional grip and then left it behind in favour of matched. It's been said – even in the pages of your magazine – that matched grip is a physically superior approach. I still believe that's true. However, that's not the whole**

story. What I've realised is that traditional grip can be a more musical approach to playing the drums. It all has to do with the rotational effect it creates and the way it affects the time.'

1. Test for Echo

This title track was another No. 1 single for Rush, making *Test for Echo* Rush's fourth consecutive album to yield a chart-topper. This track is a solid album opener and Lifeson sounds like he is having a good time here. There have certainly been stronger starts to a Rush album, but it gets the job done.

2. Driven

This was the third single released from *Test for Echo*, it reached No. 3 on the US Mainstream Rock chart, and became a popular live number. Speaking of the track Lee said, '*Driven* is just from a bass player's point of view. I wrote that song with three tracks of bass. I brought it to Alex and said, "Here's the song; I did three tracks of bass, but I just did that to fill in for the guitar", and he said, "Let's keep it with the three basses." So, I said, "I love you."

3. Half the World

Half the World is one of the album's finest moments, with a strong melody and driving rhythms. It has a strong subject matter, referencing timely social issues as well as some of Geddy Lee's finest bass work on the album. Lifeson adds some great electric and acoustic guitar textures, which combine to make this one a strong and well put-together track.

4. The Colour of Right

This is another decent number that touches on social issues. The riffs on here are reminiscent of those on *Moving Pictures* in style, but far subtler. The heavy blues-rock feel combines with some upbeat textures to create a song that pleases but doesn't create a lasting impact.

5. Time and Motion

This track is classic Rush. It is muscular, technical and features some superb playing from every band member. The track settles into a guitar-centric riff jam for the verses and choruses before Lifeson delivers one of his finest guitar solos on the album, with some excitingly wild and chaotic playing.

6. Totem

One of the album's stand-out tracks, *Totem* has a mystical, almost ethereal feel. It is a highly interesting song in terms of colour and textures, and features some intricate harmonics and a fantastic little bridge section before the main solo bursts into life.

7. Dog Years

From one of the album's best tracks to one of the worst. *Dog Years* features some truly odd and slightly cringe-worthy lyrics, and marks the point where *Test for Echo* starts to falter. The track's saving grace is that it still manages to display Peart's seriously heavy rock drumming skills, which are embellished with some great technical detail.

8. Virtuality

Despite some rather clumsy lyrics that deal with the rise of the new internet technology, many consider this to be one of the finer tracks on the album. This is thanks to a powerfully heavy riff and fantastic percussion, which is matched by array of cowbells and pressed down snare drum fills. The song reached No. 16 in the charts as a single so it certainly has some supporters.

9. Resist

This divisive track is a divergence from the rest of the album, taking Rush in an almost folk direction with a ballad. Unfortunately many would say it fails to capture the magic of previous Rush ballads,

however Lifeson's soaring guitar line is still hauntingly beautiful after many listens.

10. Limbo

This number is lush and layered bass-driven instrumental. Funk bass combined with synthesizers, water droplets and tight patterns of angular guitar make this a highly interesting piece. It's a quirky piece from Rush but many fans were disappointed to find little of the Rush sound they love in this track.

11. Carve Away the Stone

This number closes things out with a lyrical theme about removing obstacles in life backed by some incredible electric guitar from Lifeson. Whilst this track has some high points, it is ultimately unmemorable, a criticism that has been leveled at the album, which makes it a fitting album closer.



VAPOR TRAILS

(MAY 2002)

Vapor Trails was the first album released by Rush in six years after their unfortunate hiatus.

According to the band, the entire developmental process for *Vapor Trails* was extremely taxing and took

approximately fourteen months to finish, by far the longest the band had ever spent writing and recording a studio album. In fact when they gathered at Reaction Studios in Toronto on 10 January 2001, the band didn't actually play anything for three weeks. Six years is a long time for a creative collaboration to be apart, and Lifeson has said that it took some time to get **'a feel for each other's frame of mind. We needed to see if everybody was really up for it.'**

The members were up for it but all had very different ideas about the direction the album should take. Lifeson, was adamant that all keyboards to be absent on the album, using instead a layered approach to his guitar work plus Lee's vocals to provide the melodies. Lee was keen to expand and explore his vocal abilities, pushing them further than before, deciding to produce vocals in a layered technique that would replace the missing synthesisers. Peart was keen that his lyrics should take a new direction, and that he wanted to make music for 'the psychological health and welfare of all the people who have gone through a very difficult time.'

All this proved difficult to pull together in the beginning and as Lifeson put it, **'We started jamming, but we didn't have anything we were crazy about.'** This prompted the band to take another break, although this time it only lasted weeks and upon returning to the studio refreshed, Rush were able to gel once more.

The result is a record that redefines Rush's intensely individualistic music, blending their famously complex dynamics with driving

melodic hooks and a passionate, personal lyric approach. The album was greeted with rapturous enthusiasm by fans and shot straight into the charts.

Unfortunately, whilst the songs themselves were mostly considered excellent, the poor production of the album caused an issue. Lifeson has stated that Rush were **'never happy with the production.**

Perhaps we should have taken more time over the record.' The concern mostly centered around the record's 'loud' sound quality. It had overly clipped audio levels during mastering, which generated additional digital distortion during the CD production. The trend, known as the loudness war, was very common on modern CD production at the time. As Alex Lifeson recalled, **'It was a contest, and it was mastered too high, and it crackles, and it spits, and it just crushes everything. All the dynamics get lost, especially anything that had an acoustic guitar in it.'**

This displeasure with the sound quality eventually led to the album being remixed and re-released in 2013.

1. One Little Victory

The first single released from the album debuted to relative success and good reviews from critics. It is a great statement of intent and instils the listener with real hope, hearing a Rush that sound positively reinvigorated, and firing on all cylinders.

2. Ceiling Unlimited

Lifeson's guitars take the lead on this song and are later joined by Lee's virtuoso bass playing. The song switches from a rocking sound to a moody vibe and back again, putting a strong emphasis on Peart's lyrics. There's less vocal layering on this song as in others, but what is here works perfectly.

3. Ghost Rider

This highly personal song was written by Peart as a tribute to his

travels around America after his tragic losses. Lee's vocals complement the poignant subject matter perfectly and make this one of the album's highlights. Despite this the track was never released as a single.

4. Peaceable Kingdom

Musically this is a great track, even if the lyrics are a little lacking in subtlety. It's an impressive arrangement with double-layered vocals and vocalisation based melodies. These are accentuated by some surprisingly heavy and groovy riffs, particularly toward the end of the number.

5. The Stars Look Down

Despite wanting to do away with guitar solos entirely during recording, Lifeson thanfully sneaks a blisteringly high speed one into this number. Musically this feels like a continuation of the jam on *Peaceable Kingdom*, and it's a very solid track that many thought was sure to be released as a single.

6. How It Is

This is a really strong track and one of the stand-outs from this album, however it is another track that was surprisingly never released as a single. Some beautifully orchestrated guitars and vocals combine to create a wide, melodic sound that feels uplifting despite the gloomy lyrics. It is this sort of juxtaposition that makes Rush so skilful at what they do.

7. Vapor Trail

The titular track works excellently here, and showcases some thunderous drums from Peart.

The lyrics are poignant and moving, and combine brilliantly with Lee's layered vocals. This track is also a rare example of techno-fusion from Rush, a sound that they have explored before but sadly do not favour as highly as others.

8. Secret Touch

Geddy Lee named this as his favourite track from the album and it is easy to see why. His ability on the bass is captured perfectly here on this brilliantly written piece. This was released as one of only two singles from the album and enjoyed reasonable success, making it to No. 25 on the Mainstream Rock Chart.

9. Earthshine

This is another fine example of Geddy Lee's skills, as he shines throughout this number with his soaring vocal melodies and killer bass-playing. There are some interesting and well-written lyrics here centering on Peart's fascination with weather and astral phenomena.

10. Sweet Miracle

Lyrically this is a touching number that centres on Peart's journey through personal tragedy and despair to hope and new-found love. It will hit home for fans that are aware of what he has been through, but in light of the delicate subject matter the playing can be a little hard at times. It may have been more fitting to keep this as a low-key number, however the quality of the musicianship is undeniable.

11. Nocturne

This was one of the first tracks put down after Rush's break in recording the album and you can tell they were overflowing with creative energy. The almost disjointed sound is enhanced by driving guitars and some chilling vocals from Lee. It's hard, it's atmospheric and it's fun – classic Rush.

12. Freeze

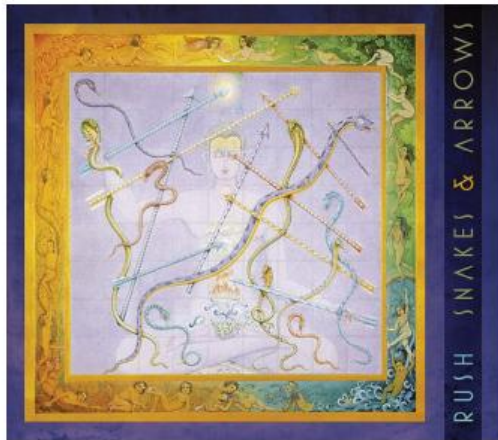
Eighteen years after the first instalment, fans were treated to the final part of the *Fear* trilogy (now with four-parts) and they were delighted. It's a hard number that continues the feel of *Nocturne*,



harking back to the Rush of earlier years. With mono-sounding guitars and spot on lyrics, this is a worthy addition to the *Fear* series.

13. Out of the Cradle

With catchy and thought-provoking lyrics, as well as some impressive double-layered guitar work, this is a great album closer. It is not Rush's most memorable track, but it is strong and well thought-out. This brings to an end a series of tracks that really showed Rush was back, doing what they and the fans love.



SNAKES & ARROWS (MAY 2007)

Though *Snakes & Arrows* was one of Rush's modern albums, it was arguably one of their most successful ever with the band gaining a worldwide chart presence. The album was originally announced in March

2007 through the Rush and released in May. The record flew off the shelves and in the US reached No. 1 in the Mainstream Rock Chart and No. 3 in the Billboard 200 chart. *Snakes & Arrows* also charted in the Top 10 in Sweden, Canada and Finland and reached No. 13 in the UK.

According to Neil Peart, inspiration for the title of the album was conceived after considerable research from several sources; the 2000-year-old Buddhist game called Leela, the Game of Self Knowledge, the related children's game Snakes and Ladders (also known as Chutes and Ladders), and Hamlet's quote 'slings and arrows.'

Peart has also spoken about the process of creating the music on *Snakes & Arrows* stating, **'When I first listen to a rough sketch of guitar, bass, vocal, and drum machine, I am hearing it as the lyricist, and I am also listening as the drummer. In a larger sense, though, I'm really listening as a fan – someone who wants to love that song. Even on first listen, I felt that way about *Bravest Face* and *The Way the Wind Blows*, and I was especially excited by how different they were from anything we had done before – fresh and vital, yet rooted in some deeper musical streams.'**

The album was all recorded at Allaire Studios in upstate New York, and the studio's very remoteness and a realised sense of harmony, spurred on the band to new creative heights. As Peart recalled,

‘Allaire’s just beautiful: high ceilings, big windows and a great view and I need that. It wasn’t really up to me to stay because I’d already stamped my feet and demanded we record my drums there. But the first couple of days we were having raging jam sessions after we’d finished up, the kind of stuff that doesn’t happen when you’re going home but we had nowhere to go but upstairs. I was so surprised because I’d left when we had planned to leave and I went and took care of some things, and when I came back the atmosphere was still so convivial and they were still working on things like vocals at eleven at night. The vocals are the hardest...’

Expectations from fans for the album had not been particularly high, following the so-so quality of *Vapor Trails*, yet *Snakes & Arrows* was pure Rush. The album combined all the elements of the Rush sound that make them so well-loved with new styles and technological advancements that had them sounding better than ever. It really is a brilliant album, and can certainly be considered the peak of Rush’s modern era.

1. Far Cry

As a single *Far Cry* peaked at No. 22 in the Mainstream Rock Charts which was rather disappointing given the commercial success of the album. The track evolved from a studio jam session between Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee, and this shows. It has a classic jam sound, but with some deeply heavy riffing and an exciting fast pace. Combined with the catchy chorus these elements make *Far Cry* a great album opener.

2. Armor and Sword

This is an intricate and complex number that shows Rush are still masters of progressive rock. There are some brilliant lyrics: ‘No one gets to their heaven without a fight’, and the subtle nuances come together to make this an interesting and enjoyable listen.

3. Workin' Them Angels

With its ever-memorable chorus, this anthemic rocker features a few trademark time changes and proves that Rush have not tamed or toned down their – if anything they continue to harden it. This is classic Rush with a new spin and it works perfectly.

4. The Larger Bowl (A Pantoum)

This song was inspired by a feverish dream Peart had whilst in Africa, as he described it, ‘...a song was playing in the store, a plaintive ballad called *The Larger Bowl*. Something about loneliness and the misfortunes of life, I recall. No such song as far as I know, but I like the title.’ This is another great track that was released as a single and reached No. 16 in the charts.

5. Spindrift

This feels like an ode to Rush’s beginnings as a Zeppelin-inspired hard rock outfit, and it is one of the stand-out tracks on this album. It’s a real rocker that still has some well-written lyrics, which use sea-weather imagery as a metaphor for a lover’s quarrel. Sadly this track failed to chart on its release as a single, why that remains a mystery.

6. The Main Monkey Business

This is the first of three instrumentals on the album. To put in that many instrumental tracks is a brave move for a rock band, and only an outfit with the chops of Rush could pull it off. This track is beautiful prog-rock insanity, and without a doubt one of the best pieces Rush ever produced. After hearing this number there can be no doubt that Rush reach new heights of musicianship on this album.

7. The Way the Wind Blows

This is another stand-out track, beginning with softly thumping

drums, before bluesy, shredding guitar comes in. The riff is deep and heavy, while the evocative lyrics such as 'Like a solitary pine, on a bare, wind blasted shore' add class and a depth to the number.

8. Hope

Here we have the second instrumental on the album, the bluesy twelve-string acoustic solo number. Although it doesn't quite dazzle like *The Main Monkey Business*, it is an interesting contribution to the album that Peart has described as Lifeson's 'secular prayer'.

9. Faithless

This is a strong track, notable for its catchy chorus and the use of a Mellotron, that lends an orchestral texture. Here Rush made a conscious effort to write and perform a song at a slower tempo than usual. Such a framework gave Peart a fresh approach in how he constructed and placed the drum fills.

10. Bravest Face

The catchy choruses continue this track, which is another solid number, that carries on the album's winning streak. Lee used Fender Custom Shop Fender Jazz Bass on this track which adds an interesting dynamic and shows what he can achieve when he plays around with different tech.

11. Good News First

This is another track that makes use of the Mellotron. It's a fairly solid number, but ultimately does not stand-out on the album. On another Rush release it may have fared better but the incredible quality of this line-up means *Good News First* is somewhat lost in the mix.

12. Malignant Narcissism

This is the final instrumental on the album and it packs a great

punch. Critics agreed as the track was nominated for a Grammy after being released as a single. It quickly became a staple of live shows and is a firm favourite among fans. Incredibly Peart revealed he'd recorded the track on a small, four-piece drum kit rather than his usual giant setup 'just for fun'.

13. We Hold On

The album ends on a high note with another strong track with lyrics that perfectly describe Rush over their illustrious career, 'We could be down and gone/But we hold on'. These words and the album itself are a testament to the enduring spirit of the trio, and a lesson to any critics: that Rush will not be written off.



CLOCKWORK ANGELS (JUNE 2012)

This is the nineteenth and final studio album by Rush. True to form Rush decided to do something different here and created their first ever full-concept album. Lyrically, *Clockwork Angels*

chronicles a young man's quest across a lavish and colourful world of steampunk and alchemy as he attempts to follow his dreams. The story features lost cities, pirates, anarchists, exotic carnival, and a rigid Watchmaker who imposes precision on every aspect of daily life. It's an enthralling story, but even when taken out of context the lyrical content of *Clockwork Angels* is excellent. Clever wordplay and poetry combined with diverse and interesting themes make this one of Rush's best albums lyrically. The words sound important to Peart himself, and Lee delivers them with subtlety and grace.

Of the album Alex Lifeson has said, **'It is a concept record. We haven't done something like this in a while. All of our albums are thematic, but this is a little more direct. I think the songs stand on their own, though. I can listen to them independently of the story, but when I hear everything from front to back, it really makes sense to me. So it works on lot of levels.'**

'We wanted something that was bold and stripped down. The goal was to make it real in your face and very much the sound of a three piece – a hard rock record in the classic sense. I'm happy to say that it really did come out the way we anticipated and hoped for.'

'I tried to pull myself back from yielding to the temptation of layering so many guitars and things that are kind of inconsequential. It's really about the basic rockiness of the songs, so it was a lot of double-tracking and beefing things up.'

No six tracks of guitars, no rhythm guitar and solos – simple little changes that made the sound more impactful.’

The sound certainly is ‘impactful’, and the album is the perfect tribute and farewell to an incredible career. To go out on a high after a career spanning five decades is an incredible feat, and one that truly places Rush amongst the elites of rock history. Thus far you have heard our take on each of Rush’s album tracks, so we’ll leave it up to Geddy Lee to walk you through this incredible record.

1. Caravan

‘*Caravan* starts the story off; it’s basically about a young guy who’s got big dreams, big desires, and a very romantic vision of what the world’s supposed to bring him and he can’t wait to go out and see it. So he kinda runs away from home, stows away on the back of an airship... This was one of the two tracks we recorded in Nashville and both this and *BU2B* were the first pieces of music that Alex and I actually wrote for this album. So it’s interesting how a lot of this stuff came together.’

2. BU2B

‘This is more about his personal upbringing and values that were instilled into this character and this is what you find when he goes out and faces this world that is not so cool. This and *Caravan* were the first two pieces of the puzzle, the rest of it was all to be filled in later.’

3. Clockwork Angels

‘This was written at the same time as the first two songs and originally *Clockwork Angels* began as the sound-scape that Alex had written on his own... Once I’d heard it I said, “Well can I play around with this as a vocal melody?” and he said “Sure”, so I messed about with it and the two of us added some power to it, took it from being such an atmospheric thing into more of a rock song.’

4. The Anarchist

‘*The Anarchist* is another song from the original sessions. Alex and I had this great jam session based upon a drum pattern that we had written and created as a loop, which is the drum pattern that actually begins that song... The chorus part was the first part that we wrote and it was born out of a jam where I had written the bass line and Alex just slotted into it with great chord progressions.’

5. Carnies

‘One of the newer songs, one of the last songs we wrote for the record actually and again it came out of a very good jam that Alex and I had. We did this jam session, just the two of us, in the middle of the Time Machine Tour when we were on a break... One of those jam sessions I looked into ended up becoming *Headlong Flight*, and the other one was the opening riff to *Carnies*. It just has a different feel for us, kinda slow heavy riff with me playing counterpoint to what Alex is playing.’

6. Halo Effect

‘We had done similar things like that in the past and we felt we needed a moment to catch your breath in the story and that’s why it began originally as completely an acoustic song but once Nick came in he felt that the choruses, or what we were choosing to call the choruses, needed to separate themselves from the verses to give the song more dynamics and that’s why it needed to be a bit heavier. So an interesting experiment in the ways of light and shade.’

7. Seven Cities of Gold

‘This is a real fiery kind of slow burn and we don’t do that too often. It’s got a nice slow sleazy burn feel to it, it’s got this kind of militaristic drum pattern while I’m playing a kind of seventies white funk bass riff against Alex, who’s pretending he’s Robin Trower. So it’s kind of an interesting fusion of different directions and it slowly all comes together in this riff.’

8. The Wreckers

'Is one of my favourite songs and we wrote it on the wrong instruments! We were doing a jam session and the computer broke down so Alex and I went into the drum room where he had all these guitars lying around. I picked up one of the acoustics that was tuned to Nashville tuning. So I was having fun pretending I could play guitar and I happened to have the lyrics to *The Wreckers* handy, so before I knew it I kinda got inspired and I'd written the verse and the chorus.'

9. Headlong Flight

'This is one of my favourite songs that we've written in the last number of years and again it was born out of that jam session that I mentioned earlier from 2011 springtime... It became a great vessel for us, that song. We had moments that were kind of reminiscent of *Bastille Day* riffs and stuff like that, so because he was looking back over his life, we chose to look back over our musical life like that.'

10. BU2B2

'A short musical respite, as the story needs to reflect for a moment at that point...'

11. Wish Them Well

'I was trying to turn it into more of a melodic song but it just wasn't happening and it ended up as being set as a kinda straight ahead rock song and I'm really happy with it. There's something special about it, especially where it comes up on the record after *BU2B2* where you're expecting to go into a down vibe and yet the song brings you right up off the seat. It stands on it's own.'

12. The Garden

'...there was something about the way we wrote that song that just worked from day one. It sounded authentic, relaxed and beautiful

and really sweet. And that comes from having great lyrics too, the lyrics are beautiful, original in form and the song wrote itself.'



RUSH

**MUSIC
LEGENDS**